



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 13, Folder 3, Black Hebrew Israelites, 1984-1987.

OFFICIAL ISRAELI STATEMENT ON THE "BLACK HEBREWS"
BY YITZHAK AGAZI, SPOKESMAN FOR THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

The established policy of Israel is one of open borders to people of all countries and nationalities of the world. This is true for the citizens of countries which do not have diplomatic relations with Israel, as well as for citizens of countries which are legally in a state of war or belligerence with Israel (the Arab states). Certainly, then, Israel's borders are open to the citizens of friendly nations, especially citizens of the United States of America.

This policy was established years ago out of a belief that the holy sites, of which Israel is the caretaker, must be open to the faithful from around the globe without distinction as to religion, race or sex. Our policy also derives from the principle of international freedom of movement, encouragement of international tourism, and the fostering of cultural ties on a reciprocal and universal basis.

The group of 26 U.S. citizens who came to Israel on March 6, 1986 attempted to deceive the passport control authorities. The declaration that this group came to Israel for the purpose of tourism was carefully evaluated by the responsible authorities and was proved to be untrue. It was clarified beyond a shadow of a doubt that this group belongs to what is called the "Black Hebrew" cult, and that they came to Israel with the declared intention of joining other members of their cult who are presently residing, illegally, in the South of Israel. This group has a collective ideology which challenges the very existence of Israel and the Jewish people. Many of its members are involved in criminal activities. Even in the U.S., many of the cult's members have been brought to trial and convicted for criminal activities.

The Ministry of Interior is prepared to discuss with any foreign citizen, on an individual basis, a request to remain in Israel either temporarily or permanently. Israel cannot afford to "import" foreign citizens in an illegal fashion who act against the society and the state. It should be noted that Israel is very careful to fairly practice its entrance procedures at passport control. Special attention and consideration are devoted to foreign citizens, so that if they are prevented from entering the country, this should not be misconstrued as discrimination of any sort. It must be noted that the members of the abovementioned group were not expelled from Israel, but rather their entry was denied -- an acceptable procedure at the port of entry in any country in the world. In this context, it should be noted that Israel was fully prepared to permit this group to enter the country on the condition that the American Embassy in Israel would guarantee their eventual exit from the country. When this guarantee was refused, their entry was refused.

/...

Finally, it should be noted that in Israel there are tens of thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish citizens who would be considered "non-white" in the United States. Just recently, Israel absorbed several thousand Ethiopian Jews, granting them full aid, welfare and rights.

There is no truth whatsoever to the statements made by this group [of Black Hebrews]. Facts and realities completely negate the lies and slander that the spokesmen of this group are spreading with malicious intent.



Israel feared Black Hebrews

By Lu Stanton León

Staff Writer

Israel last week denied entrance to a group of Black Hebrews from the New York-New Jersey area because officials believed they were linked to Black Hebrews already living in the country illegally, an Israeli spokesman said yesterday.

Israeli officials "had information linking this group to other groups of Black Hebrews in Israel," said Barukh Binah, press consul in the Israeli Consulate in New York.

"The Black Hebrews live there illegally. They do not recognize the state," he said. "They previously came posing as tourists, but after the tour was over they stayed illegally. They act in contradiction to the local society. They don't send the children to the same schools. They don't mix."

"There is no reason in the world why we should increase their numbers."

Kohain Nathanyah Halevi, director of the Hebrew Israelite organization that sponsored the tour, yesterday repeated his assertion that his group had no ties with Black Hebrews in Israel and had no

intention of trying to stay there. His group of 27 was detained in Tel Aviv by Israeli officials Friday and forced to return home, arriving in New York Sunday.

Kohain Halevi, a Hebrew Israelite who heads the Beresith Cultural Institute in Mount Vernon, N.Y., said his group was there for a seven-day tour of the Holy Land and had return tickets. Included in the group were residents of Paterson, Englewood, and Teaneck.

He said most of the tour members were Black Hebrews, a group he described as a lost tribe of Israel descended from the

wouldn't go home

biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. He said Black Hebrews have beliefs similar to Jews but do not consider themselves Jews. He likened his group to black Ethiopian Jews — only the Ethiopians never left Africa, he said.

In 1969, 39 Black Hebrews from the Chicago area arrived in Israel and settled near Dimona, a desert town in the southern part of the county. Binah said that since then their number has grown to almost 3,000, including a large number of American blacks who traveled to Israel on tourist visas and decided to stay. Many

of them destroyed their U.S. passports when they arrived in an attempt to ensure that they could stay.

Kohain Halevi said his group had no reason to want to settle in Israel, and it seemed to him that Israel has a policy of discrimination against blacks.

"It's not the question of any discrimination," Binah said of Israel's rejection of the Halevi group. "But the immigration authorities had their information linking this group to that group."

[Transcript of handwritten letter sent to the World Council of Churches]

1005/8 Hanitzahon Drive
Dimona 86000 Israel

April 7, 1984

Dear Sir:

I am writing to you because I need help from your organization; will you please help me? I came to Israel in 1974 to be with a group of people called the Black Hebrews; they are a group of Black people from America who say they are the original people of the Bible. They are convinced they have a prophetic messianic mission to establish God's Kingdom here in Israel.

Their leader is Ben Ammi Carter of Chicago who says he is the Messiah. He isn't any more the Messiah than I am. He controls the mind of his followers; his philosophy is to conquer the mind of a man and you will own his soul.

This group have touched the lives of many families throughout America. People are still coming here to join them; although the Israeli government is trying to prevent them from entering the country. I do not want another elderly person to go through what I have been through. I worked hard all my life and had a beautiful home in Detroit, Michigan and a summer home in northern Michigan in America. I had all the material things that one wanted and everything paid for, with money in the bank. I sold everything and gave the money to this group, because I believed them when I was in America. I have had one problem after another since I have been in Israel with them. I am not with the group any more and will return to the States soon.

There have been far too many deaths and attempted suicides for this number of people, including my 32 year old son, who attempted suicide in July 1982 and will be a cripple the rest of his life. Births, as well as their deaths are not registered with the proper authorities in order to conceal information. Bodies are buried around their village in vacant fields. Relatives in America do not know their loved ones are missing here in Israel.

In 1976 the group were going to be deported back to America by the Israeli government, because we are in the country illegal. Ben Ammi was going to have a mass revolution suicide for us, somewhat like Jonestown, Guyana except we were going to the mountain to starve to death. He had contacted all the news media, the Israeli government backed off. He's capable of doing something like this again.

The Hebrews are settled in three cities here in Israel. There is only one telephone in each of [the Black Hebrew communities in] the three cities, which has a lock on it. One person is assigned to the telephone who monitors all calls. If they do not want their followers to receive a call, then they are not told about the call. The same with the mail. One person picks up all mail at

the post office, and it is censored in the office before it is passed out. Relatives in America often have to go through the American Embassy to get in touch with their relatives here and that is sometimes impossible.

The group are vegetarians and many are suffering from malnutrition; many need dental work. There is a twenty-two year old young man that used to play with their band. He had a nervous breakdown a few years ago, he is now kept locked in the bathroom. He needs professional help like so many more.

In 1972 Ben Ammi had 86 of his followers to renounce their American citizenship. They were obedient to their leader. Now many want to return to America. They find that they are stateless; they and their children. The American Embassy says the Israeli government is responsible for them and the Israeli government are ignoring them. This is exactly what Ben Ammi wants, as they are destitutes. They have no place to go and will have to remain with him. He is a twisted megalomaniac. His followers are brainwashed physically and psychologically beaten into the will of a paranoid leader whom they believe [to] have divine power. I see him as a con man no different than the pimp in the ghetto.

I am most concerned about the children who are growing up illiterate and cultured deprived.

I have met with the mayor and the chief of police here in Dimona and have contacted the police department in Jerusalem, I have written three letters to the Interior Minister here in Israel and they were ignored. I have written to the American Ambassador here in Israel and to various organizations here and America asking for help. Congressman Mervyn M. Dymally of California was here to see me on August 22, 1983. He said he was going to look into this matter. I haven't heard from him since, although I have written to him.

I am thoroughly convinced that the Israeli government want to deport the group back to America, but they don't want to ruffle any feathers with the Blacks in America. Whatever [is] to be done to solve this problem will have to be done by the Blacks. The Israelis do not want to be labeled anti-black. They want me or some other black to take the initial step to bring this issue to the public.

There are human rights that are being denied, as I often say these are crimes against humanity.

Will you help me to get the truth to the people to help my people here in Israel? I appreciate any help you can give me. Thanks in advance.

[signed] Sincerely,
Geneva Holley

Geneva Holley
1005/8 Hanitzahon St.
Dimona 86000 Israel

Readers write

Black Hebrews are fifth columnists

Dear Editor:

Your headline and article of March 22 "Say Israel Boots out Black Hebrew group" was very distorted and misleading. The article was more inflammatory than the subject matter. Tying the Black Hebrews with a strain in Black-Jewish relations was way off base. Let's set the facts straight:

Israel is deporting dozens of members of the Black Hebrew sect who are arriving from the U.S. to join their colleagues in the Negev desert.

Officials in Israel say that Black

Hebrews are American Blacks who plan on joining other sect members and illegally residing in Israel. They come to Israel with round trip airplane tickets. Upon arrival in Israel they tear up their American passports and threaten Israel with reprisals if they are deported. There are nearly 3,000 Black Hebrews in Israel, all of them without any official approval. The Black Hebrews are American Blacks who went to live in North Africa back in the 1960s. After being expelled from there they suddenly began believing that they were the original

Hebrews and that the people that call themselves Jews are imposters.

The Israeli Interior Ministry state that hundreds of Black Hebrews in America are getting ready to settle in Israel illegally.

As a result ministry officials are subjecting American Blacks to questioning as to the purpose of their visit to Israel. Those who are found to belong to be Black Hebrews are expelled upon arrival. Those who are not sect members are welcomed to Israel.

The Black Hebrews are led by Ben Ami Carter, who claims his sect comprises the original Jews. There is no basis of fact for this belief. The Black Hebrews have refused to leave Israel or convert to Judaism. They do not recognize the government of Israel, serve in the armed forces, or participate in the population census. In other words they are 5th columnists living in Israel.

Israel is the farthest thing from being racist. After all, there are Jews in Israel that came from over 70 countries speaking as many languages. They come in all races -- from white to Black. More so, Israel just welcomed over 10,000 Black Jews from Ethiopia to live in Israel.

"COME TO ISRAEL, COME STAY WITH FRIENDS" is a message that extends to all Americans including Blacks.

But no country, including Israel, will welcome people that seek to undermine its society or security. Blacks who have been to Israel can attest to the fact that Israel is a democracy that welcomes all tourists regardless of race, religion or creed. (I hope your newspaper won't be afraid to publish this opposing viewpoint).

Sincerely,
Geraldo Riojal
N.Y.C.

THE RECORD - Wed. March 12, 1986
(Bergen County, N.J.)

Black Hebrews: tourists or settlers?

By Lu Stanton León
and Bill Sanderson
Staff Writers

A group of Black Hebrews from the New York-New Jersey area who were denied entrance to Israel over the weekend want an explanation and compensation for what they termed a frightening and humiliating experience at the hands of the Israeli government.

"It was terrifying," said Kohain Nathanyah Halevi, director of the Hebrew Israelite organization that sponsored the tour. The group of 27 was detained in Tel Aviv by Israeli officials Friday and forced to return home Saturday.

"It was a nightmare. The reasons we were

detained were never made specifically clear. The excuses were that we were going there to settle, although there was no single supporting evidence of that."

"We were treated like criminals, and we did nothing except try to visit the Holy Land," said Naamah Pitts of Paterson, a member of the group.

* The Israeli Consulate in New York did not respond to repeated requests for a comment yesterday. But Israeli officials have said that other Black Hebrews have burned their U.S. passports upon arrival in Israel and then disappeared. Moshe Yegar, the Israeli consul-general, said last night on WNYW-TV that his government denied entry to the group not because its members are black, but because

Black Hebrews have caused trouble in the past.

Halevi, a Hebrew Israelite who heads the Beresith Cultural Institute in Mount Vernon, N.Y., said his group was there for a seven-day tour of the Holy Land and had return tickets. Also in the group was Kheebah Curry of Englewood and Vernon Grier of Teaneck.

Halevi said most of the tour members were Black Hebrews, a group he described as a lost tribe of Israel descended from the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. He said the group has beliefs similar to Jews, but do not consider themselves Jewish. He likened

See BLACK, Page A-12

* See attached follow-up story on March 13 giving the official Israeli Consulate's response.

... over

Black Hebrews furious at rejection by Israelis

FROM PAGE A-1

the Black Hebrews to black Ethiopian Jews — only the Ethiopians never left Africa, he said.

Ethiopian Jews in recent years have been welcomed into Israel. But the Israeli government has been uncertain how to deal with Black Hebrews.

"It does seem that Israel has a policy of discrimination against blacks," Halevi said.

"I was raised in the South, and Southern segregation was no match," said Mrs. Pitts, a 39-year-old evaluator at a Newark vocational school.

Thirty-nine Black Hebrews from the Chicago area arrived in Israel in 1969 and settled near Dimona, a desert town in the southern part of the country. Since then, their number has grown to more

than 2,000, including a large number of American blacks who traveled to Israel on tourist visas and later decided to stay.

"A good portion of them destroyed their U.S. passports when they arrived in Israel to ensure that they could stay there," said Kenneth Bandler of the National Jewish Community Relations Council in New York.

There are many in Israel who view them as a cult," Bandler said. He said the group practices polygamy, which is outlawed in Israel, and that many were married to non-Jews and had been baptized in Christian churches.

"There have been some officials who favor deporting them because they feel they are a potential threat to Israeli society," Bandler said. "But the Israeli government as a whole has never supported that kind of move."

Abraham Foxman, associate national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, noted that Israel has a history of taking in immigrants from around the world.

"They have developed enough experience to be suspicious," Foxman said. "I would guess that there was probable cause to suspect that these people were not just pilgrims and tourists."

Halevi said that was not the case.

"We all had families, businesses, and professional careers to return to," he said. "We had no reason for wanting to settle in Israel. We came there with no ulterior motive other than to enjoy ourselves and to see the Holy Land."

The group had no plans to meet with the Black Hebrews in Dimona, Mrs. Pitts said.

Halevi said he is asking for a public apology from the government of Israel, restitution for all expenditures incurred by members of the tour group, an invitation to come back to Israel "with a much warmer greeting," and "to see some sort of policy worked out with the Israeli government so this kind of dehumanizing and humiliating situation won't occur again."

Grier, the travel agent who put together the tour package and who also is a Hebrew Israelite, said the



Staff photo by Ed Hill

Black Hebrews, rear, Vebulun Maccabee of Mount Vernon, N.Y.; Vernon Grier of Teaneck; Clarence Boykin of New Rochelle, N.Y., and Reuben Yitzchak of Mount Vernon, and front, Serapher Halevi of Mount Vernon; Naamah Pitts of Paterson, and Leana Yahanatan of Mount Vernon. They were among a group of 27 denied entry into Israel.

group departed from John F. Kennedy Airport Thursday night on an El Al, the Israeli national airline. When they arrived in Tel Aviv, they were detained at customs, their passports and return tickets

were taken, and, Grier said, he was interviewed as to "what the intention of our group was."

"We said we intended to stay seven days and return," said Grier, a Teaneck resident and associate

dean of special programs at William Paterson College in Wayne.

Staff writer K... assisted in the... this article.

March 10, 1986



Gannett/William Kuebler

Serapher and Kahain Nathanyah are surrounded by fellow black Hebrews from Mount Vernon as they walk through the Pan Am terminal at Kennedy Airport after being denied entry to Israel.

OBITU

Madeli

Ma

Israel believed Mount Vernon group was linked to 'illegals,' official says

By Sharon R. Butts
Staff Writer

An Israeli official said Sunday that 26 members of a Mount Vernon religious group were barred from entering Israel last week because that nation's government believed they were linked to a group living there illegally.

Meanwhile, members of the Bereshith Cultural Institute of Mount Vernon, a group of black Hebrews who returned home Sunday, said they would seek a formal apology and a reimbursement of about \$20,000 from the Israeli government for food and hotel rooms they were unable to use during a planned weeklong visit.

"There was no factual reason they denied us access to this land (Israel)," Nathanyah Halevi, the group's leader, said Sunday at a press conference at Kennedy International Airport shortly after the group's return to New York.

"At no time were we given the opportunity to explain why we were coming to the land. They assumed," Halevi said.

Barukh Binah, press officer for the Israeli Consulate in Manhattan, said Sunday that "there had been some information linking them (the Mount Vernon group) with other groups of Americans living illegally in Israel."

Binah said he could not be specific about the information, but that his government feared the Mount Vernon group was planning to settle in the southern desert city of Dimona, the home of thousands of other black Hebrews.

The settlement, which the government says is illegal, "started as small groups of tourists visiting Israel and then staying," Binah said.

"So we saw no reason why we should increase the number," he said.

Israel has denied residence visas to some 2,000 black Hebrews, most of them Americans who went there as tourists in the 1970s and waived U.S. citizenship. The group is criticized as a closed community that shuns Israeli authorities; some reject modern medicine for religious reasons and send their children to separate schools.

The sect claims descentance from biblical Israelite tribes. Their rituals include Christian and Jewish practices and are not recognized by rabbinical authorities.

The Mount Vernon group must not have been able to convince the government that its members did not plan to settle in Israel, Binah said.

The group, which left Kennedy Airport at 6 p.m. Thursday, had been detained under guard at the

Tel Aviv airport since its arrival there Friday, Halevi said.

An Israeli Interior Ministry spokesman said Saturday that the travelers were not allowed out of the airport "because they are members of the black Hebrew sect."

"We are very careful about black visitors, especially black Hebrews," spokesman Yitzhak Agasi said.

The group's passports and return tickets were taken and the travelers spent most of their stay in barracks above the airport, allowed only infrequent 15-minute breaks for fresh air, Halevi said. Meals included stale bread and cold cuts, he said.

At one point, customs officials asked the group to post a \$2,000 bond per person as proof they planned to leave Israel, said Vernon Grier, a group member who had made the travel arrangements.

Most members of the group arrived in New York wearing the same clothing they had on when they left Thursday because no showers or bathing facilities were made available, Halevi said.

"It was a nightmare," he said.

None of the group's members, including several young children and infants, were harmed physically, he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

DN 3/10/73

Next year in Mount Vernon, not Jerusalem

THE WAY THE BLACK Hebrews tell the story, their trip to Israel was intended to be a pilgrimage. "To the land of our ancestors," they said.

In all, there were 26 of them. They arrived in Israel on March 6. They got no further than Ben-Gurion Airport. For three days they were kept there, and then sent back to New York. "A nightmare," they called it.

The way the Israelis tell the story, it was not a pilgrimage at all. "Our suspicion, based on good reason, is that they would join another group of black Jews living illegally in Israel," a spokesman for the government said.

"When they landed, it was Friday afternoon," the spokesman said. "In Israel, that's almost the beginning of the Sabbath. They knew exactly what lawyer to call. Israel started to be bombarded with calls from the United States. It looked as if the plan was to embarrass Israel."

Yesterday morning, Rabbi Nathan-yah Halevi, who led the group of black Hebrews to Israel, was in Mount Vernon at the Bereshith Cultural Institute. He said he would meet soon with officials of the Israeli government.

"First and foremost, we have to have

redress. We have to have an apology from the Israeli government to African Americans and to Hebrew Israelites in particular. We also want full restitution and a trip back to Israel."

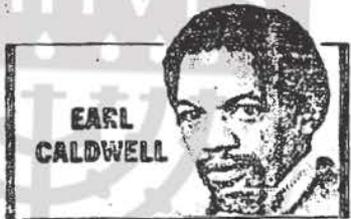
"Why is it so important?" he was asked.

"It is the land of our ancestors... our forefathers, the birthplace, the holy sacred ground that has inspired the religions of the world. We are being denied access to an important part of religious history. People are concerned that we, just as anybody else in the world, should have access to that land. Most people seem to be knowledgeable that the original Hebrews were black."

Barukh Binah, press aide at the Israeli mission in New York, said the whole episode is part of "an old story."

He said that 15 years ago a small group of black Hebrews came to Israel, saying they were tourists but instead, settled in Dimona in the Negev. He said the settlement of black Hebrews now numbers about 3,000.

"These people who come over the years as small groups, always as tourists, settled—and they do not recognize the authority of the state. They claim they are the true Israelites and they won't let themselves be numbered in



any kind of census and they behave in an obnoxious way."

"An extreme case of anti-Semitism," El Kanah Ben Kohatah, a black Hebrew of Mount Vernon said.

"We are Semitic; we can't be anti-Semitic," press aide Binah said.

"Even Germans who persecuted the Jews are given access to the Holy Land," Rabbi Halevi said.

"They are not black Jews; they adopt Hebrew names, which is their right, but they are not Jews," Barukh Binah said.

Ben Kohatah said the Israelis knew the group had no intention of trying to settle in Israel. "Mostly, they were professionals," he said. Many had wives

and children back in the United States.

"We had not anticipated at all that there would be a problem," Rabbi Halevi said. "We were so naive that, at first, we didn't even know we were being detained. When they took our passports, we thought we were being expedited through. It was clear we were just there for a visit. We were on a packaged tour. Everything was set; everything was paid for."

Israeli spokesman Binah insisted that nothing about the incident was racial. "Only last year," he said, "in Operation Moses, we rescued several thousand Ethiopian Jews."

BUT THEY'VE not been accepted in full," Rabbi Halevi said. "Their priesthood is not recognized even though it is more authentic than any in the world. Their rituals have not been accepted either. It looks well that they brought the Ethiopians there but they've stripped them of their pride, asking them to convert even though they are the oldest unbroken chain (tribe) to exist."

They are very different stories the two sides tell, but it's always that way with arguments of history and religion.

9 Held in Child-Abuse Inquiry Into Religious Sect in Queens

By The Associated Press

April 6, 1986

Police officers investigating the purported abuse of children by members of a religious sect raided two church residences in Jamaica, Queens, early yesterday, and arrested nine adults and removed five children, officials said.

The children were taken from two Yahweh Temple residences, according to Tom McCarthy, a spokesman for the Queens District Attorney, John J. Santucci, after authorities had received "allegations of systematic abuse and exploitation of children by some adult members of the religious sect, sometimes known as the Black Hebrew Israelites."

Nine adults were charged with endangering the welfare of a minor after a yearlong inquiry, a police spokesman, Sgt. John Venetucci, said.

However, Mr. McCarthy said the purported abuse came to light only last month, when two brothers, ages 8 and 13, fled the community and went to their father's home in Brooklyn.

The boys reportedly told investigators they had been beaten or threatened with mutilation if they misbehaved or failed to return with a set amount of money after a day of begging on the streets.

The police raided the residences, at 108-51 Guy R. Brewer Boulevard, formerly New York Boulevard, and 107-18 Remington Street at 3:30 A.M., according to Sergeant Venetucci.

The children, ranging in age from 9 months to 8 years, were in the custody of the city's Office of Special Services for Children, he said.

The Yahweh Temple has no rabbinically recognized connection with Judaism, and no telephone number is listed for it.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES



Sect Members Arraigned in Child Abuse Case

April 7, 1986

Seven members of a religious sect in Jamaica, Queens, were arraigned last night in Queens Criminal Court after their arrest early Saturday on charges that they beat children and forced them to beg for money.

The seven, members of a group known as the Black Hebrew Israelites, were among six men and three women arrested Saturday when police raided two Yahweh Temple residences in Queens. They were all arraigned on charges of coercion and endangering the welfare of a child and, in some cases, assault, according to a spokesman for Queens District Attorney John J. Santucci.

About 40 members of the sect, dressed in white turbans and white tunics, attended the courtroom proceedings. They were escorted from the

courtroom after chanting "Praise Yahweh" when the defendants were led away by court officers, said the spokesman, Thomas McCarthy.

The purported abuse came to light last month when two brothers, 8 and 13 years of age, fled one of the residences. The brothers left on March 19, one day after they were beaten with thin branches and threatened with further beatings, Mr. McCarthy said.

The boys, whom Mr. McCarthy declined to identify, returned to their father's home in Brooklyn, and he took them to a hospital. Doctors notified the city's Office of Special Services for Children, which passed on the information to Mr. Santucci's office two weeks later, according to Mr. McCarthy.

Mr. McCarthy and a spokesman for the Commissioner of the Human Re-

sources Administration, George Gross, said they were seeking a full explanation of the delay in notification by the Office of Special Services.

Arraigned yesterday were Yeshar Israel, 26 years old, who was identified by authorities as the sect leader, and Heman Israel, 26, identified as a temple elder. Also arraigned were Ahban Israel, 30; Batsheeba Israel, 27; Benhail Israel, 27; Ednaw Israel, 29, and Shmuayl Israel, 34. Bail was set from \$35,000 to \$200,000 each.

Two other members of the sect, Hodayath Israel, 26, and Kedemoth Israel, 31, whose fingerprints were not processed in time for court proceedings, are expected to be arraigned on similar charges, Mr. McCarthy said.

Raids on Queens Sect Nab 9 Accused of Terrorizing Kids



By Jack Sirica

Police arrested nine members of a religious sect in Queens early yesterday on charges that they coerced their children into panhandling on the streets and disciplined them routinely by beating them with wooden switches, rubbing hot sauce into their wounds and threatening to mutilate them with scissors.

The investigators also removed five children, ranging in age from 3 months to 8 years old, in the predawn raids at two white frame houses operated by the Black Hebrew Israelites in Jamaica.

Among the items confiscated during the searches were machetes, tall walking sticks that police said were used to threaten the children and a swivel chair on which the children were reportedly forced to stand, with their hands raised, during beatings.

In announcing the arrests, Thomas McCarthy, spokesman for Queens District Attorney John J. Santucci, said officials of the city's Human Resources Administration had received reports on March 20 that the child beatings were occurring at the sect's Yahweh Temples but had not notified the district attorney's office until Friday.

"What we're saying about the delay is that it boggles the mind," McCarthy said. "It was a precious loss of time that could have been well-spent in earlier initiation of the investigation."

McCarthy said members of the Queens Sex Crimes Squad and police officers from the 103rd Precinct entered the temples at 107-18 Remington St. and 108-51 Guy Brewer Blvd. at about 3:30 a.m., after obtaining search warrants.

Fifteen adults were taken into custody. Nine of them later were charged

—Continued on Page 33

'Lost Tribe' Still Roams

The Black Hebrew Israelites, whose members claim to be part of a lost tribe of Israel, believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God but consider themselves Jews.

The sect is believed to have been founded more than 30 years ago by self-proclaimed prophet William Lewis, a former appliance salesman, who urged followers to live a literal interpretation of the Old Testament, officials said yesterday.

According to Lewis, Jews are descendants of Abraham and Isaac but the Black Hebrew Israelites are descendants of Jacob.

In 1984, the Israeli government attempted to get United States immigration authorities to re-admit a group of about 1,000 Black Israelites who had renounced their American citizenship and stayed after their tourist visas had expired. Last month, a group of Black Israelites from the metropolitan area were refused permission to enter Israel.

Three members of the sect, once headquartered near Grand Rapids, Mich., but now believed to be based in Alabama, were convicted in 1984 on charges of beating to death a 12-year-old Michigan boy who failed to perform designated chores.

Two Black Hebrew Israelites are taken in by police, who charged sect members in Queens with assaulting children and forcing them to beg.

Sect Accused of Terrorizing Kids



CPI Photo

Police inspect walking sticks allegedly used to beat sect children.

—Continued from Page 5

with felony coercion and endangering the welfare of a child, a misdemeanor. Six of the nine arrested also were charged with felony assault, McCarthy said. Arraignment is scheduled for tomorrow. The six others taken into custody were later released.

All the suspects gave police the same last name — Israel. Three women and six men were arrested; they are Heman Israel and Jeshur Israel, both 26 and described as church elders; Kedemoth Israel, 31; Hodiyyh Israel, 26; Shmuay Israel, 34; Ahban Israel, 30; Benhail Israel, 27; Ednan Israel, 29, and Batshea Israel, 27.

After their removal, the five children were examined by a doctor and were being held last night in the custody of the Bureau of Child Welfare, police said.

At the sect's Remington Street house yesterday afternoon, the front window shades were drawn, and two white vehicles with the word "Yahweh" written on them were parked by the curb. A man who answered the door and declined to give his name said, "We're not making any comment."

McCarthy said much of the information on which investigators based their charges in the Queens case came from two boys, ages 8 and 13, who had "fled" from the temples to their father's home in Brooklyn on March 19. When the father examined the boys, who had been living at the temples with their mother, he found what appeared to be lash marks on their backs, legs and buttocks.

Doctors at Interfaith Medical Center in Brooklyn examined the boys the next day, then promptly notified officials at HRA's Office of Special Services for Children that there was "an obvious case of child abuse," McCarthy said. Santucci's office did not receive reports about the case until 11 a.m. on Friday, McCarthy said.

Suzanne Trazoff, a spokeswoman for HRA, said yesterday that officials initially thought the beatings were isolated cases. As soon as HRA officials discovered that the floggings were more widespread, they contacted Santucci, Trazoff said.

The Rev. W.C. Robinson, pastor of the New Macedonia Church across Guy Brewer Boulevard from one of the

houses, said, "They were very nice children. They didn't look to be roughly handled children. I haven't seen them going in the streets begging."

McCarthy said that in interviews with investigators, the two boys and other children who lived at the two homes in Queens said they were regularly dispatched to panhandle in the streets. The children also said they were disciplined if their begging was not deemed a success. During the proceedings, they said they were forced to remove their clothes and stand on a wooden swivel chair with their hands above their heads as the elders beat them with switches.

Sometimes, the adults would apply "spicy hot sauce" to the wounds, McCarthy said, adding that if the children "fell off in the course of being beaten, they would receive extra lashes."

Sgt. John Venetucci, a spokesman for the Police Department, also said the boys reported that the adults would threaten to mutilate their genitals with scissors. He said: "They would then tell the child to turn his head. They'd clip the scissors . . . and tell him he was bleeding."



BY C. LONDON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Nine Black Hebrews, charged with operating an illegal operation, listen to opening arguments at their trial.

BLACK HEBREW DEFENDANTS

These are the defendants on trial in U.S. District Court before Chief Judge Aubrey Robinson:

- Warren Brown, 55, also known as Prince Asiel, Nasi Asiel, the Ambassador, Shagrer, Chief and Legs. Brown was the highest-ranking member of the Black Hebrew sect in the United States. He is represented by John Garland and Lewis Myers Jr.
- James B. Stone, 37, also known as Yeriel, was a principal lieutenant to Brown. His attorney is James Lyons.
- Gerald Bethea, 41, also known as Ben Kiel, was also an aide to Brown. He is represented by Melvin Dildane.
- J.C. Vortis, 36, also known as Tyrone Downs, Navee and Ben, was leader of the Black Hebrews organization in the District and Baltimore. His attorney is Ernest McIntosh Jr.
- Gregory Coles, 23, also known as Rooakel, was Vortis' principal deputy. His attorney is William Garber.
- Cordell DeBardelaben, 25, also known as Sadi Kiel, was a leader of the Washington-Baltimore Black Hebrew organization. He is represented by Joseph Bernard.
- Thomas Cavin, 28, also known as Navaniel, is represented by James S. Kurz.
- Darryl Grisson, 26, also known as Amatsyah, is represented by S. Edgar Wilhite.
- Kevin Robinson, 26, also known as Smiel, is represented by Dennis Hart.

ing to operate a criminal enterprise. The other counts cover individual criminal acts such as carrying a forged check over state lines, illegal use of a telephone, transporting a stolen car over state lines and obtaining welfare benefits fraudulently. A 10th person named in the indictment, Mary Swoope, also known as Anam, is now in Israel and is not on trial.

In addition, Vortis, Stone, Cavin, Coles and Robinson are charged along with 13 other Black Hebrews in a second indictment with conspiracy and wire fraud in connection with a scheme to defraud the American Telephone and Telegraph Co. and the MCI Co. by charging to accounts of company customers a large number of national and international telephone calls.

Another indictment charges six Black Hebrews with defrauding the Montgomery and Prince George's county departments of social services of welfare benefits paid to them and their children.

The trial here before Chief Judge Aubrey Robinson is expected to continue for at least two months.

9 Black Hebrews Go on Trial in D.C.

3.12.86
Leader, Members Accused of Running 'Shopping Spree' Crime Ring

Black Jews

By Nancy Lewis
 Washington Post Staff Writer C1

A former Chicago jukebox salesman who now heads the Black Hebrews in the United States and eight of the religious group's members went on trial in federal court here this week on charges of operating what prosecutors said was a multimillion-dollar crime ring that specialized in "shopping sprees" using counterfeit credit cards and bogus checks and trafficking in stolen airline tickets.

"The government is not saying

that 'The Nation' is an illegal operation," Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Hannan said in his opening arguments Monday. It is "saying the nine defendants used illegal methods for the purposes of 'The Nation' and for themselves."

Specifically, he said, the proceeds of the crime ring were used to support Black Hebrews in this country and in Israel.

Members of the Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem, also called the Black Hebrews and The Nation, believe that blacks were a part of the original 12 tribes

of Israel. The group has branches, called "extensions," in Israel, Ghana, Liberia and the United States, where there are an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 members.

The nine men on trial—Warren Brown, James B. Stone and Gerald Bethea of Chicago and J.C. Vortis, Cordell DeBardelaben, Thomas Cavin, Darryl Grisson, Gregory Coles and Kevin Robinson of Washington—were arrested last summer after an 18-month investigation that included court-approved wiretaps on three telephone lines in two
 See BLACK HEBREWS, C4, Col. 1

Trial of Nine Black Hebrews Opens in D.C. Federal Court

BLACK HEBREWS, From C1

of the group's three communal houses here.

Searches of the houses—at 556 Varnum St. NW, 1218 Taylor St. NE and 386 37th Place SE—and rental storage areas in the area yielded dozens of stolen airline tickets, stolen and counterfeit credit cards and fake identity cards and stolen checkbooks.

Of more than 1,500 hours of conversations recorded from the wiretaps, Hannan said, 20 to 30 hours of tapes will be played for the jury and constitute a major part of the government's evidence in the case.

But one defense attorney told the jury in opening arguments yesterday that the government misinterpreted the conversations, failing to understand "black English" phrases and religious references. Another said that despite the government's statements that "The Nation" is not on trial, "I think the evidence in this trial will show otherwise."

However, attorneys have said in court they will not base their clients' defenses on religious persecution or other First Amendment issues.

Ernest McIntosh Jr., lawyer for Vortis, cited as an example of the government's incorrect interpretation of the tapes their view of repeated references to "Ben."

He said the name Ben means son of Israel and that it is a "fundamental religious tenet" of the Black Hebrews that Ben is the middle name of every male member. In addition, he said, any female member of the group who is in trouble and needs help uses "Ben" as a code word when contacting other members of the group.

Lewis Myers Jr., attorney for Warren Brown, told the jury that, despite the government's claims, The Nation is being tried along with the nine men. He also warned that many of the government's wit-

nesses are former members who left the Black Hebrews after disagreements over religious matters and that some had since conducted a vengeance-based campaign against the group's leaders.

According to the government's case, Myers said, Brown "is supposed to be a big-time racketeer, a gangster directing a criminal enterprise" who is "hiding behind God somehow." But Brown was named in the 29 criminal counts against him primarily because he is the leader of the Black Hebrews in this country "and in order to have a [criminal] enterprise, they had to have a leader."

Myers, who questioned the government's decision to tap phones here rather than at the group's headquarters in Chicago, characterized the wiretapped conversations as "one-way."

"The most significant, the most profound thing about this case is not what you hear but what you don't hear," Myers said.

Attorney Melvin Dildine seemed to try to separate his client, Gerald Bethea who lives in Chicago, from the "criminal activity in the Washington, D.C., area."

"It's not a crime that my client is a Black Hebrew in Chicago," Dildine told the jury.

Dennis Hart, speaking on behalf of Coles' attorney, who was involved in another trial, said Coles did not arrive in this area until 1985 and had no "material possessions" that would indicate he had participated in such a crime ring.

Hart said that the fact his own client, Kevin Robinson, was named last in the 69-count indictment reflected the lack of evidence against him.

Attorneys for Stone, DeBardelaben, Cavin and Grisson made no opening statements.

The indictment charges all nine men with operating a continuing criminal enterprise and with conspir-

... OVER

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date April 23, 1986

to Area Directors and Executive Assistants

from George E. Gruen, Director, Israel & Middle East Affairs

subject Alert on Black Hebrew Israelites

CONFIDENTIAL

There have been several recent news developments affecting the Black Hebrews, the messianic sect which officially calls itself the "Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem," both in Israel and in the United States.

You will recall that this sect of American Blacks, which claims to be the original Biblical Hebrews and has never been recognized as Jewish by any rabbinic group, originated in the Black ghettos of Chicago and other cities in the early 1960's. After a brief stay in Liberia, the first members of the group came to Israel in December 1969. Their request for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return was denied since they were not regarded as Jewish and would not agree to conversion. They were permitted to stay for an initial three months while their status was examined. Since then they have been in a legal limbo and have been joined by other who have managed to enter Israel by various subterfuges. (For background details on the group and the difficulties of resolving the problem, see my enclosed report, The Position of the "Black Hebrews" in Israel: An Examination of the Complex Issues Involved, AJC, June 12, 1984. A brief review of the issues and more recent developments including the recommendation of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior that they be expelled, are contained in "Israel and the Black Hebrews," a Report from the Israel Office of the American Jewish Committee, issued on November 7, 1985.)

I. Israel Moves to Expel Black Hebrews

According to Yediot Aharonot (April 18, 1986) on April 17, a task force of nearly 200 Israeli police arrested a group of 46 Black Hebrews -- men, women and children -- who were found living and working illegally at a citrus packing plant in Rehovot. They were taken to various detention centers and kept there in preparation for their deportation back to the United States. The paper reports that they had come from the main center of the group in Dimona some six months previously. The leader of the sect, Ben-Ami Carter, contacted a lawyer to prepare an appeal to the High Court of Justice to obtain a court order to stop the expulsion proceedings. Carter was quoted as saying that while he did not know what the court's decision would be, "this time we will react sharply and will fight to the end."

cc: Steering Committee, Commission on International Relations

Ha'Aretz, (April 18, 1986) gives the number of those arrested as 47, and says that they have been living illegally in Israel for about six months. The paper adds that the group, which was arrested at 1 AM, offered no resistance. Ha'Aretz notes that the police operation was supervised by a team from the Ministry of the Interior, which had requested the help of the police in its stringent efforts to crack down on foreign nationals who were staying in Israel illegally, "at a time when the number of unemployed is constantly increasing."

The Israeli Consulate in New York has confirmed the crackdown, noting that in recent months the Ministry of the Interior has expelled illegal workers who had come from the Philippines, Thailand, Yugoslavia and India. Yitzhak Agazi, spokesman of the Ministry of the Interior, was quoted by Yediot Aharonot as saying that the Black Hebrews have a "clear anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli ideology, and many of them are being sought by the authorities in the United States and in Israel for various crimes." He added that the proper legal procedures would be followed, but that he expected the process to end with their departure from Israel.

So far none of this information has appeared in the American press, but if the expulsion orders are carried out, we can expect a major outcry by the Black Hebrews and efforts to enlist allies within the general Black community. This will no doubt exacerbate Black-Jewish relations.

II. Indictment of Black Hebrews in U.S. on Criminal Charges

The enclosed article from the Washington Post of March 12, 1986 gives details of the major criminal charges, including credit card fraud and use of bogus checks and stolen airlines tickets, being leveled by the U.S. Government against nine leaders of the Black Hebrews in the United States. Included is Prince Asiel Ben Israel (a.k.a. Warren Brown), who has been acting as the "foreign minister" of the Black Hebrews and with whom we and various other Jewish and Black civil rights leaders have met with over the years, at his request, in our unsuccessful efforts to bring about a lawful and equitable solution to the Black Hebrew problem in Israel.

III. Arraignment of Black Hebrews in Child Abuse Cases

I am enclosing three clippings reporting on the arraignment of members of a Black Hebrew Israelite group in Queens, New York, on charges of child abuse. It is not clear how closely this group is related to the group in Israel.

IV. Mount Vernon Black Hebrew Tourists Expelled from Israel

Finally, enclosed are several clippings relating to the unfortunate experience of a group of 26 Black Hebrews from Mt. Vernon, who were denied entry to Israel on March 7 and were deported on the first available flight. This caused quite a stir in the New York media,

especially because of some insensitive remarks attributed to Mr. Agazi. We contacted our Israel Office and obtained a statement of clarification from Mr. Agazi, the Spokesman of the Ministry of Interior. A copy is enclosed for your information.

I should add confidentially that the feeling of Jewish representatives from Westchester, with whom Bernice Newman and I met at the Israeli Consulate, is that this is a middle class group, who appear to have been legitimate tourists and did not intend to join the other members of the sect living illegally in Dimona, Arad and Mitzpe Ramon. However, in view of what has been going on, the Israeli authorities were naturally suspicious and within their legal rights to deport them. The idea is being explored to have a few members of this group invited to visit Israel again together with prominent citizens of Mt. Vernon, possibly including the mayor, who happens to be Black. This would help make it clear that Israel has nothing against Blacks, indeed it has welcomed thousands of Black Jews from Ethiopia, but that it must safeguard itself against those, such as the Black Hebrew Israelites, who would enter and live in the country without fully obeying the laws.

* * *

P.S. Also included is a copy of a letter from Geneva Holley, one of the defectors of the group in Dimona, in which she makes charges about abusive treatment of others in the group by the leadership.

THE POSITION OF THE "BLACK HEBREWS" IN ISRAEL
An Examination of the Complex Issues Involved

By DR. GEORGE E. GRUEN
Director, Israel & Middle East Affairs



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
165 East 56 Street
New York, N.Y. 10022

THE POSITION OF THE "BLACK HEBREWS" IN ISRAEL
An Examination of the Complex Issues Involved

By George E. Gruen
Director, Israel & Middle East Affairs

As elections approach in Israel, the future of the "Black Hebrew" community has once again become a headline issue in the Israeli press. Who are these people, why has their presence in Israel aroused so much controversy and what are some of the issues that need to be addressed?

1. Who are the Black Hebrews?

While popularly known in Israel as the Black Hebrews, this messianic sect officially calls itself the "Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem." According to a basic study by Dr. Morris Lounds, Jr., a Black sociologist, the group appears to have arisen in the Black ghettos of Chicago in the early 1960's, at a time when "there were a number of Black Jewish cult groups in Chicago advocating a form of Judaism blended with Black nationalism." (Lounds, Israel's Black Hebrews: Black Americans in Search of Identity, Washington, D.C., University Press of America, Inc. 1981.) Most of these groups soon disintegrated and the remainder did not seriously consider emigration from the United States. The Black Hebrews, however, did. In the summer of 1967 a group of some 170, mostly from Chicago, left -- not for Jerusalem, but for Monrovia, the capital of Liberia.

2. How were the Black Hebrews Received in Liberia?

Initially they were welcomed by the Liberian Government, in accordance with its policy of encouraging immigration, especially of American Blacks. They were given rent-free housing for three months and a monthly allotment of \$60 per person. They were also offered a 300-acre site to develop into farmland, as they had requested. Relations soon soured. The Black Hebrews contend that the land was not suitable and that they were being discriminated against because they would not work on the Sabbath. The Liberian authorities denied the charges, noting that they were also given housing in Monrovia and that the Constitution specifically exempted Sabbath-observers from working on Saturday. Some of the disillusioned members of the group returned to the United States.

After two years, in November 1969, Liberian Attorney General James A. A. Pierre instituted deportation proceedings against some 75 remaining members of the Black Hebrews on the ground that they were "undesirable aliens" and "without any apparent intention of working or becoming useful to the country." (Liberian Star, Nov. 4, 1969.) Moreover, Mr. Pierre pointed out that the Government had repeatedly offered them citizenship but had asked them to spread out and be assimilated into the general population of the country, which had been founded by freed American slaves in 1847. The Black Hebrews had refused to apply for citizenship and had rejected the Government's request.

Mr. Milt Greaves of the Liberian Department of Information made a scathing comment: "When they arrived in Liberia, they stated that there were others in Chicago also interested in coming to settle in Liberia. The basis of identification then was that we were all 'Black soul brothers' who had to stand together. When they discovered that Liberia, a developing country, could ill afford parasites merely because they were 'soul brothers,' they decided to seek greener pastures. The logical place was Israel. Where they will go next is a little harder to determine. Their dissatisfaction with Liberia stems not from discrimination but from the false picture they had of the country as a country flowing with 'free' milk and honey!" ("America's Black Jews in Israel," Israel, March 1970, p. 36.)

3. When did the Black Hebrews first arrive in Israel?

A few weeks later, on December 21, 1969, a group of 39 Black Hebrews landed at Lydda International Airport, and asked to be granted immediate immigrant status under Israel's Law of Return and to be given land to establish a kibbutz, or communal farm, near Tel Aviv. The Israeli immigration authorities said that the question of whether they were in fact Jewish was to be determined by the government in consultation with the rabbinical courts. The authorities granted them tourist status for three months, as is offered to any American visitor entering on a valid U.S. passport. In addition, the group was settled in the Negev development town of Dimona and given assistance in obtaining housing, employment, Hebrew language instruction, and other support usually provided to new immigrants.

Shortly thereafter, the rest of the Hebrew Israelites from Liberia arrived in two groups and joined their brethren in Dimona. At first relations with the general community, mostly composed of recent Jewish immigrants, were fairly amicable. Dimona's dynamic young mayor, Israel Navon, was quoted as saying that "we've got jobs for 600 more, if we had housing for them." The Black Hebrews' colorful, individual clothing, their eagerness to learn Hebrew, their sense of community, all were at first seen as positive factors.

While their beliefs aroused curiosity, they did not encounter discrimination on the basis of their race. Indeed, many of their Jewish immigrant neighbors had come from India, or North Africa, and their skin color was in some cases just as dark as that of the Hebrew Israelites.

4. Did race have anything to do with the treatment of the Black Hebrews?

Israeli officials point out that the exceptional measures to aid the group were undertaken largely because of Israel's special sensitivity toward persons who had suffered discrimination and also its concern to avoid any possible suspicion of racism. They emphasize that had a similarly bizarre sect of white persons come with the claim that they were the original and only true Israelites they would have been barred entry and summarily deported.

The question of the human rights of the Black Hebrews in Israel was investigated in January 1981 by a delegation of prominent American Black civil rights leaders, including Bayard Rustin of the A. Philip Randolph Education Fund; Alexander J. Allen, Vice President of the National Urban League; Lewis J. Carter III, National Labor Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and Mrs. Arthur C. Logan, National Council of Negro Women. The delegation intensely investigated the question of whether official

racism was involved in the Black Hebrew problem, raised the question with each person the delegation met and "spent considerable time with non-white groups which we felt would be most sensitive to any such problems." The delegation stated that "Ben-Ami Carter, leader of the Black Hebrews, told us that he does not consider that his community's problems spring from official racism."

In its report, the delegation stated:

From all the evidence we have heard, including that from the Black Hebrew Community, we conclude that official racism plays no part in this sensitive problem. The initial welcome given to the Black Hebrews and the offer of conversion clearly support that conclusion. The general agreement is that the official difficulties stem from deep-seated religious, philosophical and political differences.

5. Are the Black Hebrews Jewish?

Black Hebrew leaders have taken conflicting positions about whether they claim to be Jewish. Hiskiyahu Blackwell, who led the first group of arrivals, told reporters at Lydda airport: "All we ask is to be allowed to live here in Israel and work and study. We are Jewish. We have always been Jewish, and we have come to Israel for the same reason any Jew comes here." (New York Times, Dec. 23, 1969.)

Rabbi Dar'i of Jaffa, a native of Morocco, who had discovered "lost Jewish souls" in Arab families and helped them return to Judaism, became interested in the Black Hebrews and sought to help them with the authorities. Upon investigation he found that they readily admitted that before coming to Israel there had been considerable intermarriage with non-Jewish Blacks, some had been married in church, some had been baptized. Dr. Lounds found that many of their rituals also departed radically from Jewish tradition, for example their absolute fasting every Sabbath, their strict vegetarianism, and their assertion that the holy days "are memorials, of less importance for devotional acts for Hebrew Israelites than for Jews." (Lounds, Israel's Black Hebrews, p. 61.)

Rabbi Dar'i recommended that they undergo formal Orthodox conversion to Judaism and accept the normative Jewish practices. They would also have to stop the practice of polygamy. (Israel has outlawed polygamy except for those who had lawfully contracted multiple marriages before the coming of the law into effect.) Several Black Hebrews were considering the route of formal conversion to Judaism when Ben-Ami Carter, "The Righteous Teacher," came from Liberia with 47 additional followers from Chicago and strenuously rejected formal conversion to Judaism. (Israel, March 1970, pp.38-43.)

Carter now began to expound a view of history and theology that was bound to antagonize the Israeli authorities. Typical was the statement that the Israeli Jews "are mostly European converts who adopted the ways of the ancient Israelites. There is no link between these people and the Biblical Israelites who were Black." (Jerusalem Post, Jan. 9, 1973)

Professor Lounds reported that "Hebrew Israelites argue that they are a nation (not a religion) whose identity, culture, history, and language has been stolen by others who were jealous of their special relationship with God as his

'chosen people.' Those who stole their identity have adopted the name Jews, and have had the collaboration of the rest of the world in a conspiracy to conceal the identity of the true Hebrew people." (op. cit., p. 52.)

According to Ben-Ami Carter, who was also known to his followers as Nasi Hashalom, "The Prince of Peace," the Hebrew Israelites had returned to the Land of Israel to establish the Kingdom of God. In 1973 Carter told Lounds: "1977 is the date when the Kingdom of God will be in its glory at Jerusalem." After a series of plagues and a war of Armageddon, "the world will have to acknowledge these are the people of almighty God, this is His government or His Kingdom and they are going to have to worship and accept the Hebrew Israelite Kingdom that is at Jerusalem." (Ibid., pp. 57-58.)

In an effort to raise the consciousness among Black Americans to their "true identity" as Hebrew Israelites and to encourage them to return to Israel, Black Hebrew leaders sought to spread their apocalyptic vision. Thus, in a 1975 interview, Prince Asiel Ben Israel (Warren Brown), the "International Ambassador" of the Hebrew Israelites, told Black World:

By 1977, the lands and the institutions now being controlled by the illegal government occupying that land [Israel] will be in the hands of Black people from America, with the authority of the Original Hebrew Israelite Nation from Jerusalem. (Quoted in "The Black Hebrews," by Roberta Elliott, Newsview, Feb. 14, 1984.)

Lately, Ben-Ami Carter has toned down his rhetoric. In response to a question as to how similar his religion was to "traditional Judaism," Carter recently declared: "We have no religion as it is known to man today." The group follows a "righteous way of life" based upon "love of God and fellow man," that is "very similar" to that of the Jewish people. "We believe in the Old Testament and the Ten Commandments. We just don't accept the traditional things that have been handed down through the Mishnah and Gemara." Consequently, the group accepts "the traditional High Holy Days," but "we don't accept Hanukkah, we don't celebrate Purim." (Interview by Roberta Elliott, Newsview, February 14, 1984, p. 16.)

After the Israeli rabbinical authorities had decided that the Black Hebrews were not Jewish and the Minister of Interior began expulsion proceedings against Black Hebrews who had either entered the country illegally or whose residence permits had expired, the Black Hebrews went to court. During the trial, they did not claim to be "Jews," but argued that the Law of Return should apply to anyone who regarded himself as a Hebrew by nationality or birthright. The Court ruled that since the Hebrew Israelites were not Jewish they could not benefit from the Law of Return. The Ministry of the Interior therefore was acting within its rights to expel Black Hebrews who were living in the country illegally.

Significantly, as a humanitarian gesture, the Court recommended that all those Hebrew Israelites already residing in the country -- then estimated at a few hundred souls -- be allowed to remain in Israel. (Lounds, op. cit., pp. 49-50 and 161-62. For description and analysis of the court case, see the Jerusalem Post, Jan. 9, 1973.)

6. What factors have exacerbated the problem?

As a matter of actual practice the Ministry of the Interior did not physically deport members of the Black Hebrew community, with the exception of a few against whom criminal charges were pending in the United States. From the legal standpoint, however, neither the Minister of the Interior, who had the discretion to do so, nor the Government as a whole was prepared to grant formal status to the Black Hebrew community as citizens or as permanent residents. Since they could not obtain official Israeli identity cards, the members of the Black Hebrew community were denied access to the official employment agencies and they thus also did not qualify for membership in the Histadrut, the labor union, and the various health and educational services. They also did not qualify for government-subsidized housing. They have eked out a meager living through handicrafts, construction work, the sale of baked goods, and contributions from supporters in the United States. (Defectors from the group, such as Melvin Coleman, one of Carter's former key aides, charge that much of the funds come from robberies and credit card theft in the United States.)

Once the Black Hebrew claim for admission as immigrants under the Law of Return had been denied, the immigration authorities were instructed not to permit other members of the group to enter the country. However, an undetermined number of other Black Hebrews have managed to enter the country, either on doctored U.S. passports which had belonged to the original arrivals and which had been recycled, or as "tourists" on valid American passports. One side effect of this practice was that the officials at the ports of entry began to subject to lengthy interrogation bona fide Black American visitors for fear that they were planning to join the Dimona community. This caused embarrassment for the individuals involved and left the mistaken but unfortunate impression that American Blacks were being singled out for what they regarded as harassment because of their color.

Within Dimona, the arrival of additional illegal immigrants plus the high birth rate within the polygamous Hebrew Israelite community soon caused severe problems of overcrowding with several families sharing a single apartment. Some of the Black Hebrews moved to the nearby towns of Arad and Mitzpe Ramon. Relations with their Israeli neighbors soon deteriorated. One of the ways in which the Hebrew Israelites supported themselves was through entertainment troupes, such as "The Soul Messengers." The neighbors complained about the noise of the group's practice sessions as well as the noise of the many children.

There have also been repeated allegations both by Israeli officials and by defectors from the group that Ben-Ami Carter, the group's charismatic leader, exercised his authority in arbitrary and dictatorial fashion that was harmful to the members of his flock, particularly the women and children. The sect's refusal to use regular doctors and hospitals compounded the health problems resulting from the strict vegetarianism practiced by the group. No one knows how many infants and young children died of malnutrition since in most cases burials occurred clandestinely. In a recent interview Ben-Ami Carter conceded that as a consequence of vitamin B-12 deficiency that results from a totally vegetarian diet "I would imagine we've lost 15 babies in the last 15 years -- mostly in the first 4 or 5 years." Carter claimed to have solved the nutritional problem and shrugged off the casualties as the inevitable result of creating a new life style: "Just like there are those experimenting with the atomic age we're

experimenting with the age of health, the age of love, the age of sharing. But we're paying the price first for the people of Israel, and afterwards for all men." (Interview with Roberta Elliott, Newsview, Feb. 14, 1984, p.17.)

There are no precise figures as to the total number of Black Hebrews currently living in Israel. Prince Asiel gives a figure of 2,500, while the Israeli police claim to have information on 2,000. The Washington Post and Jerusalem Post have published estimates as high as 3,000. The problem is compounded by the fact that it is very difficult for Black Hebrews who wish to leave the organized Dimona community either to establish themselves elsewhere in Israel or to return to the United States. According to the Washington Post, the "sect claims about 25,000 members worldwide," most still in the Chicago area. (Washington Post, Nov. 14, 1983.)

In anticipation of Israeli legal efforts to deport the group, Ben-Ami Carter in 1973 convinced 80 other Black Hebrews to formally renounce their United States citizenship. This is the only such group expatriation in American history, according to the State Department. The consequence is that the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service regards these Black Hebrews as no different from the millions of other aliens seeking to enter the United States. Evidence of a past criminal record or illegal moral conduct, such as the polygamy practiced by the Black Hebrews, is enough to bar them from re-entry to the United States.

7. What efforts have been made to resolve the problem?

Over the years various efforts have been made by some Israeli officials to alleviate certain aspects of the problems facing the Black Hebrew community and one major effort was made to reach a comprehensive solution of the issue. These efforts have been supported by the Black civil rights groups listed above and also by American Jewish intergroup relations agencies, notably the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, the Jewish Labor Committee and the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

Within Israel the initiative was taken by Jacques Amir, a Labor Party Knesset member from Dimona. After raising the problem in the Knesset in 1974, he was appointed chairman of a subcommittee to investigate the cult. The Interior and Environment Committee of the Knesset recommended a full-scale commission to examine all aspects of the problem. On August 4, 1978 Minister of the Interior Joseph Burg appointed a four-man committee headed by David Glass, chairman of the Knesset's Law Committee. Its mandate was to examine the problem in its entirety, including: a) legal aspects of the group's stay in Israel, b) their living conditions and employment, and c) their relationship with their neighbors. The committee was also asked to explore possible solutions.

In June 1980, the Special Committee issued a 147-page report, which has since been popularly known as the "Glass Report." The committee took evidence from 55 people and read extensive background material, including research studies, surveys, press clippings and documentary files. The report devoted chapters to "ideology; immigration to Israel and the relationships of the 'Black Hebrews' with their neighbors; structure of the cult; living conditions of the cult in Israel; observance of the law and criminal involvement; 'Black Hebrew' propaganda; and the Government's handling of the problem."

In evaluating various proposed solutions, the Glass Committee concluded that simply maintaining the status quo was an unacceptable option because it was likely to provoke violent incidents, did nothing to end the "disgrace" of the substandard living conditions of the members of the cult, and would perpetuate the "inconceivable" situation in which "thousands of people should reside in the State of Israel without any legal status, beyond the law, and violating legal norms in various areas every single day."

The committee noted that the most popular option within the Israeli public at large -- and the solution recommended by the Israel Police -- was to deport the cult from Israel. Five arguments were cited in support of this solution, including the fact that there was no precedent for a sovereign state permitting the stay of a group of persons who migrated and resided there illegally, "while adopting an attitude which denies the existence of that same country." Moreover, "every state uses its right to limit immigration and to expel from its borders persons who reside there illegally." The committee then listed seven arguments against expulsion, including the fact that whatever Israel's legal rights, the "Government's mishandling of the matter" for more than ten years had made expulsion no longer a feasible policy because it would cause hardship for the individuals involved, it was "likely to lead to a tragedy" since the cult leaders would forcibly resist deportation, and that there would be a very negative impact upon Black-Jewish relations in the United States and upon Israel's standing within the United States and in African countries, where the spurious argument of racism "would fall on ready ears." Moreover, "there will be many Jews both in Israel and abroad, among them many victims of persecutions and expulsions, who will be horrified at the thought of mass expulsion of men, women, and children -- however, negative the general attitude towards the cult might be."

8. What were the recommendations of the Special Committee?

The Special Committee noted that the major reason it took 20 months to reach its final conclusions was that they were "the fruit of much difficult heart-searching" and that more than once "the scale tipped in favor of one option or another." While it expressed criticism of the Government's handling of the problem, it noted "in justification of the Government agencies, that this question -- with all its political, social, legal and moral implications -- must certainly be one of the most difficult ever faced by the people of Israel, far exceeding the number of people involved."

The Special Committee made four basic recommendations: that the "Black Hebrews" be allowed to stay in Israel; that the members of the cult be granted legal status in accordance with the Law of Entry into Israel (1952); that an area be assigned in which the group could establish its own communal village community; and that the above recommendations be conditional upon the leadership of the cult agreeing to undertake to guarantee not to add new immigrants from abroad to the community.

The committee spelled out detailed procedures for identifying and checking into the background of each member of the community to insure that they were remaining as members of the community of their own free will, that they were prepared to abide by Israeli law, and that they were not wanted on criminal charges in the United States. The qualified members of the group would be given the status of "long-term temporary resident" for a period of two years. This would entitle them to an identity card and the right to work and qualify for

other government social services. If the two year trial period was completed without any further violations by the Hebrew Israelites, then they would be eligible for permanent residence permits.

The committee urged that the American Embassy in Tel Aviv facilitate the return to the United States of any person who desired to leave the cult and return to America. Conversely, the committee asked the Ministry of the Interior to act favorably upon individual requests from Black Hebrews in the United States who wished to join close family members (spouse, dependent child or parent) living in Israel.

The Minister of the Interior was requested to bring the recommendations to the Government. The Special Committee concluded that its package of recommendations "is basically a moral, humane and Jewish decision. Its speedy implementation, in spite of the many difficulties that may be encountered, will be a tribute to the maturity of Jewish society in Israel." (A 45-page summary in English of the Glass Committee report was published jointly by the Israel offices of the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress.)

9. What was the effect of the Special Committee's report?

The comprehensive solution proposed by the Special Committee was never implemented because Interior Minister Burg, after some deliberation, decided to reject it in view of the objections raised by the policy authorities. However, he also did not adopt the draconian legal alternative of expelling all those who had entered or remained in Israel illegally. While the legal position of the Black Hebrews has thus remained in limbo, several practical measures were undertaken to deal with some of the symptoms of the problem.

The first to act was Jacques Amir, who in 1978 had been elected mayor of Dimona, and who was anxious to resolve the explosive problem of overcrowding, which had created serious health and sanitation problems by 1980. "Both sides were suffering: the Black Hebrews and their neighbors. So from a strictly humanitarian point of view, I had to do something," Amir told the Jerusalem Post. With the tacit consent of Housing Minister David Levy, Amir moved the members of the Dimona community from the "Victory Neighborhood" into an abandoned absorption center, which had fallen into a state of disrepair. Largely by their own efforts, the Black Hebrews rehabilitated and transformed the 100 apartments into decent living quarters and have maintained them well.

Mayor Amir's initiative thus removed a major source of friction between the Black Hebrews and Dimona's Jewish community and has also eased the housing problem for the time being. However, friction continues in Arad and Mitzpe Ramon, where serious overcrowding has aroused the resentment of the Black Hebrews' neighbors. Some of the residents of Arad have formed a "Committee for the Return of the Black Hebrews" (to the United States). The committee has provided help, including temporary housing in Tel Aviv, for Black Hebrews who have defected from the sect.

With regard to the issue of complying with Israeli laws and not encouraging additional Black Hebrews to come to Israel illegally, Ben-Ami Carter wrote to Minister Burg on January 14, 1979 "on behalf of the Israelite community." In the letter, Carter assured Dr. Burg that "we regard ourselves as Israelis bound up with the fate of the State of Israel both spiritually and physically." He promised that the group would be "a productive community for the good of the

State." He acknowledged that initially the group had "an outsider's concept," but that now the group did not wish to do anything "which would create problems or distress to the State." The group sought only "to stay in the Land of Israel and to serve the God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Ben-Ami Carter specifically pledged that "if we are so requested, we shall not add illegally a single person to our community, and we shall continue to try to convince the State of Israel" to accept other Hebrew Israelites "only through official channels." Carter concluded that he hoped to open a new chapter of positive cooperation and noted that "our community works for the State of Israel abroad and can bring about fascinating results in America and Africa."

The Ministry of the Interior cites the continued efforts by Black Hebrew adherents to infiltrate into the country and join the Dimona community as proof of the group's failure to keep its commitment to abide by the law. The response of the Black Hebrew leaders is that their commitment to stop "illegal" immigration was dependent upon the Government's implementation of the entire Glass Report. Since the Government had failed to give them legal permanent status, they did not feel bound by Ben-Ami Carter's pledge.

There is continuing dispute over the adequacy of the group's education and health services. Some in Israel contend that the Black Hebrews fail to avail themselves of the state school systems and health care facilities because they prefer to operate their own spiritual schools and natural medicine centers. Others say that Ben-Ami Carter prevents members of the cult from using hospitals and state schools. Still others say that the absence of full status as permanent residents makes the Black Hebrews unqualified for certain social services.

A related problem is that of employment. In areas where there was a shortage of labor, the Government ministries unofficially permitted the hiring of Black Hebrews. In February 1978 the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith sent a letter to Dr. Burg endorsing a proposal made to the Histadrut, the Israeli Federation of Labor, by the North American Representative of the Histadrut and by the Secretary General of the Histadrut Labor Council in Beersheba. This proposal would have accepted members of the Black Hebrew community as full members of the Histadrut. In addition to qualifying them for union jobs, this would also have entitled them to the full range of medical, educational and cultural services provided by the Histadrut. The Histadrut was also requested to ask the Ministry of Social Betterment and Labor to provide the Black Hebrews with a legal channel for employment through the Labor Exchange. The proposal has not been implemented. The Histadrut and the Labor Exchange say they can not issue membership cards to persons who do not have valid identity cards issued by the Ministry of the Interior.

The reluctance of the Ministry of the Interior to grant permanent status to the Black Hebrews is due not only to the "illegal" immigration efforts but has been reinforced by periodic reports of criminal activity engaged in by members of the cult in the United States. According to a report in the Washington Post, November 14, 1983, "the Washington office of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service says it has about a dozen warrants outstanding for fugitive Black Hebrews charged with credit card fraud, check forgery and similar white collar crimes." Black Hebrew representative Prince Asiel Ben Israel contends that there are very few genuine criminals among the Black Hebrews community and that those charged

with passport fraud are no more guilty of a crime than Jews who sought to go "illegally" to Palestine when the British severely restricted Jewish immigration. Ben-Ami Carter says he is not responsible for what his adherents do in the United States, but insists that there are no persons engaging in crime among those in his community in Israel.

There have also been recurrent allegations by defectors from the Black Hebrews that the discipline imposed by the leaders of the cult on the women and children is harmful to their health. Indirect corroboration of these charges was provided by the case of the death of a 12-year old boy, on July 4, 1983, after being subjected to disciplinary beatings at the House of Judah camp, a communal community run by Black Hebrew Israelites in rural Michigan. On January 20, 1984 two male members of the sect were sentenced to one year in jail on child cruelty charges and on March 16 the boy's mother was sentenced to 4 to 15 years in prison for beating her son to death. Judge George Corsiglia of the Circuit Court called the boy's death "a case of somebody subjecting herself and family to an institution that apparently had no leadership or leadership that couldn't control certain members." (UPI report in New York Times, March 17, 1984, and AP report, New York Times, January 21, 1984.)

10. What recent developments have taken place?

According to Prince Asiel Ben Israel, an American team of health and educational experts has been invited to visit the Dimona community to investigate the health and educational situation of the community. American political representatives have also been requested to inquire and press the Israel Government to implement the provisions of the Glass Report. In February 1984 Mr. Amir said he was writing to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir urging him to place the Black Hebrew question on the Cabinet's agenda in order to solve the problem "politically." However, in response to a parliamentary question in April, Minister Burg once again reiterated that "the Black Hebrews will not be given an official status in Israel."

The call for new elections in Israel, scheduled for July 23, 1984, has thrust the Black Hebrew question into the political arena. Eli Hilleli, who was recently elected mayor of Dimona, disagrees with Amir's approach of providing housing for the group and regularizing their status. According to Hilleli, "I was opposed to this move because I felt that this was a way of perpetuating rather than solving the problem." He makes it clear he wants the Black Hebrews out of Dimona: "I'm going to ask all the political parties to promise to do something to solve the problem once and for all after the elections -- and not at Dimona's expense."

Dov Shilansky, a deputy minister in the Prime Minister's office, told a Jerusalem Post reporter in Beersheba, on April 29, "I promise you, that Black Hebrews won't be here very much longer." He added that "they are worse than the PLO," because "they want to take over." Yehoshua Kahana, the deputy director-general of the Ministry of the Interior, confirmed the testimony of defectors from the group that Ben-Ami Carter still exercised absolute control over the group, was a self-appointed healer and educator, who still claimed to be the Messiah and that Blacks were the true Israelites. "We cannot agree to these things in Israel," Kahana said, and therefore "the group as a group cannot remain in this country." (Jerusalem Post, May 6, 1984.)

These statements by various Israeli officials, and in particular the remarks by Shilansky, caused alarm within the Black Hebrew community in Israel and outrage among their supporters in the United States, who brought the issue to the attention of the media and also turned for help to the Black and Jewish human rights organizations in the United States. The latter urged the Israel Government to disavow the extreme tone of the Shilansky statement and to refrain from any precipitous action with regard to the Black Hebrew community. While the Israel Government did not explicitly disavow the Shilansky statement, assurances were provided that there had been no change in the status of the Black Hebrews and that there were no plans for any imminent action, such as the possible mass deportation implicit in Shilansky's statement.

There the matter rests for the moment. However, the problem remains unresolved. The longer the present precarious and unsatisfactory status quo is maintained, the more complex the problem becomes and the greater the number of persons whose lives are affected. One can only hope that following the Israeli elections the new Government will try once again to work out a comprehensive, humanitarian and equitable solution. Any such solution must be based upon respect for Israel's sovereignty and obedience to its laws, on the one hand, and the safeguarding of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all individuals living in its territory, on the other.

84-580-18
June 12, 1984





REPORT

From the Israel Office of the American Jewish Committee

Rehov Ethiopia 9, Jerusalem 95 149 Tel. 226532, 233551 Cable: Wisnom, Jerusalem

ISRAEL AND THE BLACK HEBREWS

A religious cult of black Americans calling themselves the "Black Hebrews" first began to arrive in Israel sixteen years ago. Today it is estimated that there are 3,000 cult members living in the southern Israeli development towns of Dimona, Arad, and Mitzpe Ramon.

The Black Hebrews are one of the scores, and perhaps hundreds, of esoteric religious cults found among the black communities of the U.S. This particular sect, headed by its charismatic leader, Ben-Ami Carter, has developed an ideology which claims that they, and not the Jews, are the true descendants of the Biblical People of Israel, and as such are the rightful possessors of the land of Israel.

The sect originated in Chicago in the mid-1960's, during a period of great ferment among American blacks. In keeping with one of the then-current ideological trends among American blacks that saw their future where their past had been, in their ancestral homelands of black Africa, members of the Black Hebrews began to migrate to the west African state of Liberia. By 1969, the Liberian government had had their fill of them. Being blacks themselves and thus not sharing liberal whites' fears of being seen as anti-black racists, the Liberians did not hesitate in expelling the Black Hebrews.

Ever since the Black Hebrews became a subject of media interest there have been varying, but persistent, reports concerning their alleged criminal background in the U.S. as an explanation of their original decision to migrate. In any case, when the Liberian government decided to expel them, the leaders of the sect were clear about not returning to the U.S. Instead, the cult leader, Ben-Ami Carter, woke up one morning with a revelation that God had appeared and ordered him to lead his people "across the river" into the Land of Israel, just as the ancient Israelites had done after their years in the wilderness. The basis of this command was the conviction that the Black Hebrews were the only true Hebrews, and that the Jews who had set up the State of Israel were imposters.

The first members of the cult began to arrive in Israel in 1969 and went to the Negev [southern Israeli desert] town of Dimona. They entered Israel on U.S. passports, whose holders do not require visas for entry to Israel. At first they did not arouse any suspicion, and were viewed as an exotic sect among many others with a special attachment to the Holy Land. Suspicions were first aroused when it became clear that they had long overstayed their welcome as tourists, and when their closed cultic life-style in Dimona started creating tensions and

friction with the townspeople. As Ben-Ami Carter and his Black Hebrews became established in Dimona, they began to issue anti-Israel statements, which further aroused official antagonism.

Since the mid-1970's, some Israeli officials have pressed to expel them. There have been several obstacles to such a step. First was the great sensitivity regarding such an extreme measure against a group of blacks, which would have left Israel open to charges of racism. This sensitivity was heightened by talks with leaders of various American Jewish organizations who feared that expulsion of the Black Hebrews by Israel could even further exacerbate the already deteriorated relations between the black and Jewish leaderships in the U.S.

But above all, there were two other factors: fear that Carter and the other leaders would carry out a plan of mass suicide if officials would try to begin large scale expulsions from the country; and the official opposition of the U.S. government.

Not much has changed over the past 16 years except for Israel's rather ineffectual attempts to keep new Black Hebrews arrivals from joining the original group, and the resultant growth of the community to an estimated 3,000. The issue of the Black Hebrews has surfaced recently in the Israeli press due to behind-the-scenes reports that there might be a change in the offing in regard to Israel's policy of benign but chagrined neglect.

At the end of September of 1985, the Director-General of the Ministry of Interior, Haim Kubersky, returned from a visit to the U.S. for talks with American officials, the details of which were kept secret. Unofficial reports disclosed that Kubersky had come to talk about new developments in connection with the Black Hebrews. These reports were triggered by the discovery that members of the Black Hebrews sect in the U.S. had been involved in major thefts of forged bank checks and airline tickets totalling millions of dollars. There were reports that most of this money had been sent to Israel to support the Black Hebrew communities, whose members are in dire economic straits due to the economic recession.

The reports surrounding the Kubersky mission were given even greater credence by the reported visit to Israel of a team of FBI investigators for the purpose of obtaining additional information on the cult in Israel and on their connections with Black Hebrews standing trial in the U.S.

The issue is today considered so sensitive that neither official Israeli sources nor those of the U.S. embassy are willing to talk of these developments or of the future of the Black Hebrews. This report, therefore, is based on past press reports and press features at times when officials were ready to talk more openly, and on interviews with a retired Israeli police official, Michael Buchner, whose last post had been liaison officer with American law enforcement officials in the U.S.

In that capacity Buchner paid special attention to the American aspect of the Black Hebrews question.

Why do the Black Hebrews constitute a problem to Israel? The first and primary answer concerns basic Israeli immigration policy. Israel is a small and overcrowded country. With a few exceptions the right to immigrate to Israel is considered to be reserved to members of the Jewish People throughout the world, and especially to members of persecuted Jewish minorities such as the Ethiopian and Soviet Jews. An integral part of the ruling Zionist ideology is that large numbers of other Diaspora Jews, especially those from the U.S., will eventually also emigrate to Israel. While Christians with a religious affinity to the Holy Land are welcomed as visitors, there is great reticence in granting the right to permanently sojourn in Israel to large groups of non-Jews.

Secondly, the fact remains that the Black Hebrews entered the country under false pretenses and continue to remain there illegally. Shortly after their arrival, 80 members of the original group notified American officials of the waiving of their American citizenship. The Americans were apparently not upset by the Black Hebrews' severance of their connections with the U.S. Subsequently, later arrivals were required by the sect to hand over their U.S. passports to its leader, Ben-Ami Carter. His possession of their documents is one of the forms of control he has over potential defectors. Although there are procedures for the naturalization of non-Jewish immigrants for the purpose of bestowing Israeli citizenship, the Black Hebrews have consciously refrained from applying for such citizenship.

Despite official Israeli attempts to prevent new arrivals from joining the sect, these have proved ineffectual. At worst, they resulted in unpleasant and invidious treatment of bona fide black tourists from the U.S. who were wrongly suspected of being surreptitious Black Hebrews. But others who have passed through such searches and interrogations at Ben-Gurion Airport have subsequently disappeared and joined the Black Hebrews in their Negev communities.

Thirdly, the cultic nature of these communities is a source of concern for the authorities. This concern was heightened following the mass suicide of the Jonestown cult in South America in the middle of the last decade. Carter is reported to be a charismatic figure similar to the head of the Jonestown cult. He absolutely dominates the Black Hebrew community, controls all the income of its members, decides on the distribution of housing, is reported to have full rights to the sexual use and abuse of the community's women. There have also been reports of physical abuse of adults and children as part of a campaign to maintain total control over the members of the community and to prevent defections.

It should be noted that nearly all these reports have been based on exposes by such defectors, of whom there have been several score over

the years. Carter and the other sect leaders understandably deny all the charges levelled against them. Given the secretive and closed nature of the communities, there has been nearly no corroboration of the charges made by the defectors from independent sources. For example, there have been repeated reports of the secret burial of deceased cult members in the Negev sands, some of whom may have fallen victim to internal foul play and violence, but no bodies have been found. It also should be added, especially in light of the reports of criminal activity in the U.S. on the part of the Black Hebrews, and of the known previous criminal background of some of the original immigrants of the sect, that no known criminal activity of the Black Hebrews has been reported in Israel.

There is also growing opposition of the local inhabitants of Dimona and Arad to the presence of the Black Hebrews among them in closed neighborhoods. Their presence in Dimona, however, has been made possible by the readiness of local apartment owners to rent to them at inflated rates.

In addition to these sources for suspicion, there has been the growing fear, fuelled at times by incendiary anti-Israel and anti-Semitic statements by Carter and other sect leaders, of a connection between the Black Hebrews with subversive Palestinian-Arab elements. This is a fear that has grown with the recent rise in PLO-sponsored terrorist activity in the occupied territories, which are not far from Dimona, and within Israel's pre-1967 borders.

This latter fear was exacerbated by a secret report submitted to the police some time ago by Deputy Police Commander Michael Buchner. In the course of his contacts with the FBI, he was permitted to meet with a Black Hebrew in Atlanta, Georgia who was serving as an FBI informant. Buchner reported that the informant told him that he had once asked one of the leaders, in a secret meeting, how he intended to overcome the Jews.

"In Israel," the informant reported the leader as saying, "we have arsenals with weapons which we bought from our brothers, the Palestinians. Now we are simply waiting for the next war between Israel and the Arabs. By then, we should number 20,000. We will take action when all the Jewish men are at the front and only the elderly and children are left in the rear. It should take only 5,000 of our fighters to take over the Knesset, the government buildings, and the media of mass communications."

Deputy Commander Buchner says he reported this conversation to the police in Israel and he knows that it was the subject of a meeting of officers in the Criminal Investigations Division. The police passed it on to the Ministry of Interior, which handed responsibility for "searching for hidden weapon caches" back to the police. As far as Buchner knows, nothing else has come of the report.

In August 1978, former Minister of Interior Yosef Burg appointed a committee headed by former Knesset Member David Glass to investigate what should be done about the Black Hebrews. The committee reported back a year later, saying that letting the Black Hebrews remain in Israel "is the lesser of the evils," and that expelling them could cause unimaginable harm to the American Jewish community, and to Israel's image abroad. It recommended that their hitherto uncontrolled activities be restricted and urged that they be given a place of their own to settle so as to remove them from Dimona.

The Minister of Interior did not adopt the recommendations, except for the fact that in the subsequent six years he refrained from taking any steps for their expulsion.

In December 1984, however, an internal memo prepared by the Ministry of Interior, and circulated among other government departments, recommended that the leaders of the Black Hebrews be expelled in the hope that, in their absence, the rest of the community, which was growing at an alarming rate, would disintegrate.

The Ministry memo also raised the problem of to where to expel the leaders and the position of the American authorities. It noted that in protracted meetings with American Embassy officials, including a meeting between Interior Minister Burg and U.S. Ambassador Samuel Lewis, the Americans consistently evinced a hard-nosed attitude. The political advisor at the embassy reportedly hinted in a meeting with Deputy Director-General Yehoshua Cahana that the U.S. would view any attempt to deport the stateless leaders of the cult to the U.S. "as an unfriendly act."

The same memo added that in a meeting with Dr. Burg, Ambassador Lewis had warned that the U.S. would not only close her gates and return the Black Hebrews to Israel, but would also deport Israelis with criminal records who were living in the U.S.

Israeli officials obviously hope that the U.S. will change its stand now that the criminal acts of the Black Hebrews in the U.S. are being unearthed, and their connection with the sect in Israel exposed. In this connection it was noted that the FBI recently detained Ben Ami Cater's No. 2 man in Chicago -- a man by the name of Oren Brown, who in Israel has taken the name Prince Asael Ben-Israel. On the basis of listening in to close to 1500 of his phone conversations, Brown is being held on suspicion of forging credit cards, checks and airline tickets.

But even if the U.S. changes its policy, and cooperates with Israel in the deportation of the Black Hebrew leaders, the threat of an attempt at mass suicide in such an eventuality remains a very real one, according to the stories told by the defectors from the sect.

Say Israel boots out Black Hebrew group

3-22-86

ISK/BLACK Hebrew

Bar order called very humiliating

By PETER NOEL

Special to the Amsterdam News

Black-Jewish relations - which worsened during the Jesse Jackson 1984 presidential campaign - erupted last week amid charges a religious group was barred from entering Israel because Israeli government policy discourages Black visitors.

The incident not only has triggered diplomatic and image problems for Israel but threatens to undermine precarious "understandings" between Black-Jewish coalitions in the New York area.

What started off as a pilgrimage to the "holy land" turned into a "humiliating" and "dehumanizing" ordeal for 26 members and friends of the Bereshith Cultural Institute, a Mt. Vernon, Westchester-based Black Hebrew group.

The group departed from Kennedy International Airport March 6 aboard the Israeli airline, EL-AL for a meticulously planned "Sun and Summit in Jerusalem" for a weeklong visit. They were denied entry upon their arrival at Ben Gurion Airport outside Tel Aviv on the grounds that they had planned to

join other Black Hebrews who allegedly had settled in Israel illegally.

Yitzhak Agasi, an Israeli Interior Ministry official, told the Gannett Westchester Newspaper chain that the tourists were prohibited from leaving the airport "because they are members of the Black Hebrew sect."

Agasi reportedly added: "We are very careful about Black visitors, especially Black Hebrews."

"They indicted us upon association because they suspected and they assumed," said Rabbi Kohain Nathan yah Halevi who organized the 9,000 mile trip. "We were not offered the opportunity to explain why we were there."

Halevi denied the group planned to settle in Israel. He said the group's exclusion was "an insult to every African, American, and Hebrew Israelite whose tax dollars goes to the assistance of Israel."

"Israel carefully excludes Black visitors yet there is no discrimination as to whose tax dollars it receives," the rabbi stressed.

Israeli immigration officials confiscated the groups passports and returned

(Continued on Page 30)

Israel boots out

(Continued from Page 1)

tickets and asked each member of the group to post a \$2,000 personal bond. The Israelis later demanded a half a million dollars as assurance that the group would not stay over.

"It was ridiculous because we had showed them our round trip tickets," Halevi said. "We offered them job references to prove that we had no intention of staying in Israel."

Halevi said opposition to the group's presence in Israel was so sensitive that a young Israeli girl burst into tears when one official suggested issuing the tourists temporary passes. The suggestion was revoked and the bewildered

Black Hebrews were forced to spend the next 36 hours in detention in cramped, stuffy army barracks above the airport building.

Halevi said the group was guarded at all times by about 20 armed soldiers who had threatened to use force when the group initially refused to huddle into the army barracks.

"They behaved like terrorists to us," said a dejected Serapher Helavi who had planned the trip as a Bar Mitzvah (a rite performed by the Hebrew Israelites and Jews to celebrate passage into manhood) gift to her son Nahshon who will be 13 in October. "When he got back to the states he saw a man with big, black

boots and ran because he was afraid."

The group charged they were fed "cold cuts on stale bread. We were given curdled milk and the children had to sleep on the floor."

Ms. Balkis Makada, 79, was treated in Israel for stress triggered by the ordeal. The elderly woman was hospitalized at New Rochelle Hospital Medical Center upon her return to New York.

The security measures were so tight that the group was allowed only 15-minute breaks for fresh air and were denied access to shower and bathing facilities, Halevi said.

The rabbi insisted that "had we been white Hebrews" there would have been no questions asked.

"It was just 28 Americans who are Black and we were denied entry on a basis of Israeli policy," Halevi said.

But a spokesman for the Israeli consulate in Manhattan denied the Jewish state discriminated against Blacks.

"There is no such policy," declared Barukh Beinah.

Beinah said officials in Israel were "acting upon the suspicion" that the travelers had arrived to link up with the Black Hebrews who have settled in the city of Dimona. He said the Black Hebrews entered Israel illegally in 1969 and in the early 70s.

"They came in small groups of 15, 20 and 30 people saying that they were tourists," he said. "They even had round trip tickets."

The spokesman said that about 3,000 Black Hebrews living in Israel have been denied residence visas "because they don't recognize the authority of the government."

"They don't allow themselves to be

counted in the population census and they claim to be the true descendants of the ancient Israelites," Beinah said.

He said deportation of the illegal Hebrews was "a sensitive issue."

"I am not saying," he added, "that we won't in the future. But we see no reason to increase their number."

As members of the group displayed what would have been a fun-filled itinerary for the trip, Halevi vowed to recover the \$20,000 from the Israeli government that was advanced for food and hotel rooms.

The Black Hebrews have launched a media campaign to draw attention to "our violation of civil rights in a land where we had right."

The group said it would demand an apology from the Israeli government. Meanwhile they have written protest letters to U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz, Gov. Mario Cuomo, Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Rep. Charles Rangel.

The Israelis apparently are fighting back. It's "Come to Israel!" advertisements are aired frequently than usual following its latest skirmish with the Black Hebrews.

Analysts of Black-Jewish relations believe that the barring of the Black Hebrews could further upset Israel's delicate balance in the Black community. Some say the backlash would be felt the hardest by moderate Jewish groups which work consistently to advocate tolerance among the two ethnic groups.

Black-Jewish ties fell to a new low during the 1984 presidential campaign when the Rev. Jesse Jackson referred to Jews as hymies. Jackson was pressured to public apologize to Jewish groups.

Jackson, also at the strongest urging of the Jews, repudiated Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan for allegedly calling Hitler "a great man."

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date May 5, 1986
to Area Directors and Executive Assistants
from George E. Gruen, Director, Israel & Middle East Affairs
subject Update on Black Hebrew Israelites

Since my memo of April 23rd, there have been the following developments:

- I. The Jerusalem Post (April 23, 1986) reports that a planned protest march by the Black Hebrews in Israel was called off after discussions between Carter and the regional police commander. A distorted version of these developments appeared in the Amsterdam News (New York) on April 26. Thus far I have not seen coverage in the general American media.
- II. Further details of the trial of Black Hebrews on criminal charges in the United States appeared in the Washington Post on April 29.

Copies of the above mentioned articles are attached.

GEG:el

Encs.

cc: Steering Committee, Commission on International Relations

9196 (IRD-8) Update

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

Black Hebrews call off protest march to capital

By LIORA MORIEL

Jerusalem Post Reporter

DIMONA. – The police yesterday persuaded the Black Hebrews to call off their planned protest march to Jerusalem. Police said the march was illegal and liable to provoke disturbances.

The *Jerusalem Post* has learned that since Yitzhak Peretz became interior minister, he has worked to deport the Black Hebrews to the U.S., although 78 of the adults in the sect have renounced their U.S. citizenship and a third of the group is made up of Israeli-born members.

Under the latest policy any sect member arrested for any reason, is charged with illegal residence, and deportation proceedings are begun. This was what happened last week with the arrest in Rehovot of 46 Black Hebrews, who had allegedly been working without permits and had no visas.

The planned march to Jerusalem, together with a hunger strike, was to protest against the arrest and scheduled deportation of the 46.

After cult leader Ben-Ami Carter announced the march at a press conference in Tel Aviv on Monday, he returned to his headquarters here to plan strategy. But the police, fearing confrontations during the march as well as the disruption of traffic during the Pessah holiday, decided to stop it.

"We met and talked with Carter twice during the night," said Negev police commander Haim Ben-Ayun. "The first time, at 8 p.m., we told him in no uncertain terms that we did not want trouble." He said that 600 policemen had surrounded the cult's headquarters to prevent anyone from setting out. Four men tried to break through just before dawn, and

were detained.

They did not ask for a permit. They are all here illegally to begin with, and marching without a permit would have added insult to injury," Ben-Ayun said.

When, at 4 a.m., there were signs that Carter was losing his grip on his followers, Ben-Ayun and Dimona police chief David Vaknin spelled out the consequences of any illegal action.

"I said that if they tried anything funny we would arrest them, even women, and resort to violence if necessary. He realized we meant business and called on everyone to understand the situation and cooperate," Ben-Ayun said.

Eight mounted policemen, a crack central police unit, a tear gas unit, civil defence troops and Border Police were on hand from dawn – "we brought in a little of everything" – and by 10:30 yesterday morning it was all over.

"They sang songs from the Bible and called out all kinds of things, but our instructions to them, in Hebrew and in English, not to come out were effective," said Ben-Ayun.

The Black Hebrews cult – estimated by police to be 2,500 strong, but put at just 1,500 by defectors from the group – lives in an abandoned absorption centre on the edge of Dimona. Two much smaller groups live in Arad and in Mitzpe Ramon, but all the cult's children go to school in Dimona.

After the situation had been defused yesterday morning, Ben-Ayun and Vaknin met Carter to formalize a "truce." Half the force surrounding their centre was sent home, and police agreed to consider Carter's request that they free the four men arrested earlier.



Black Hebrews face police in Dimona shortly before the authorities persuaded members of the sect to call off their protest march to Jerusalem. (AFP)

OVER....

Blast Israel raid on Black Hebrews

By J. ZAMGBA BROWNE
Amsterdam News Staff

Anti-Israel demonstrations are being planned in several key cities across the country including Atlanta, Chicago and Washington, D.C. to protest against an April 17 military raid on Black Hebrew Israelites targets in Rekovite.

The predawn raid in which about 300 soldiers reportedly participated resulted in the arrests of 46 unarmed Afro-Americans including men, women and teenagers on charges of working without permits for the past 17 years, processing fruits for export to Europe.

Mahm Ben Yehadad, a U.S. based spokesman for the Black Hebrew Is-

raelites, said some 1,500 relatives and friends of those who were arrested were to conduct a giant freedom march from Dimona to Jerusalem last Tuesday, but were stopped by police and soldiers.

Yehadad said many of the demonstrators were to go on a hunger strike as they undertook the 100-mile journey to Jerusalem to protest what he termed, "the inhumane treatment of Black Jews by the Zionist Government of Israel."

He further said his group has already filed a formal protest with the Israeli Government over the raid and also demanded information about the fate of those who were arrested.

Yehadad said he has also issued a formal appeal to the nation's Black community for its support in the struggle for justice for the Black Hebrew Israelites who were "kidnapped" by the Government of Israel.

A spokesman at the Israeli Consulate here justified the arrests, saying that the Black Hebrew Israelites had been in the country illegally for the past 17 years and were not entitled to work.

But Laura Kam, deputy press secretary, denied that military personnel were involved in the arrests. She said police used to make the arrests and that the Black Hebrew Israelites had gone without permits from Dimona to Rekovite to

work at a fruit processing plant.

Ms. Kam said those who were arrested are being processed for deportation to the U.S. She further said that the Israeli Government decided to call off last Tuesday's protest march because the demonstrators had vowed to camp out indefinitely in front of the Prime Minister's office.

Minister Yehadad described the latest confrontation as an attempt by the Israeli Government with the support of the Reagan Administration to "expel our people from the country, but we will not be intimidated."

He said since the Black Hebrew Is-

(Continued on Page 30)

Condemn Israeli raid

(Continued from Page 1)

raelites immigrated to Israel from the U.S. in 1969, they have been targets of constant harassment by the government such as "preventing us from working to make a living even though some of us pay taxes." But Ms. Kam said the action was necessary in the wake of the country's sluggish economy.

"Our people are often accused by authorities in Israel that we are sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and more dangerous than the PLO," said Minister Yehadad in a telephone interview from his office in Atlanta.

Yehadad said his people are also accused of supporting Col. Mohammad Khadafy's international terrorism

campaign. "This is absolutely ridiculous because we are not terrorists," the Minister said.

He also refuted a claim by the Israeli Government that the Black Hebrew Israelites are in the country illegally. "We have simply returned to a land that was once owned by our forefathers including Isaac, Jacob and Abraham. Therefore, we don't consider ourselves as intruders," said Yehadad.

The Minister said he has sent telegrams to several government agencies including the U.S. State Department, the Congressional Black Caucus as well as foreign embassies seeking to help "to liberate our people who are being illegally detained in Zionist Israel."

OVER....

Lives of Theft, Promises of Salvation

Trial of Black Hebrews Paints Picture of Sect

By Nancy Lewis
Washington Post Staff Writer

Warrena Bostic arrived unusually early for work at Diplomat Travel Service that cold December morning.

About 90 minutes before the travel agency was to open, Bostic asked a guard at the 15th Street NW building to let her enter the office by a rear door. Once inside, she opened two boxes of blank airline tickets, "took as many as I could put into my shopping bag," placed her sweater atop the bundles and walked out.

A few hours later, in a New York motel room, Bostic, now 30, handed the tickets to a man she knew as Yeriel, a leader of the Black Hebrews group. Four days later, she was whisked away to the sect's settlement in Monrovia, Liberia, to escape prosecution for the Dec. 17, 1981, theft, and leaving behind her three children.

Bostic's story, told last week to a federal court jury, and the testimony of two other former sect members provides what prosecutors allege is an inside view of a multi-million-dollar international crime ring operated by Warren Brown, the U.S. leader of the sect, J.C. Vortis, the Washington Black Hebrew leader, and some of its members to support the group's activities in this country and abroad.

The testimony of Bostic and the two other former members dealt with more than just the crimes that they say they com-



BY LAUREL GUY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Warrena Bostic tells jury of stealing blank airline tickets for the Black Hebrews sect.

mitted, painting a broad picture of how members of the sect live here and in the group's foreign settlements.

Theirs were tales of an existence that recognized no laws save those of their Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem—a life style that was fueled primarily by stolen airline tickets, stolen cars and stolen merchandise and that was predicated on the promise of a better life in Israel.

On trial are Brown, 55, who is also known as Prince Asiel, Vortis, 36, who is also

See SF, B7, Col. 2

OVER....

Trial of Black Hebrews Sheds Light on Sect Members' Life Style

SECT, From B1

known as Navee, and seven other Black Hebrews on charges of operating a continuing criminal enterprise, mail and wire fraud, and trafficking in stolen vehicles and other merchandise. The trial is in its seventh week here before U.S. District Court Chief Judge Aubrey E. Robinson Jr.

Involving more than a dozen attorneys, scores of witnesses, thousands of documents and 20 to 30 hours of telephone conversations taped under a court-ordered wiretap, the trial has moved slowly, and prosecutors estimate that it will last at least another month.

The courtroom is a study of contrasts as the defendants, usually dressed in white or brightly colored tunics and trousers or flowing robes, known as "culture garments," listen to conferences at the judge's bench through high-tech, wireless headphones. The tactic saves the jury of seven women and five men from being shuttled in and out of the courtroom.

Robinson and prosecutors, led by J. Michael Hannon Jr., have said that the Black Hebrews sect, also known as The Nation, is not on trial. The defendants' attorneys said they will not base their defense on religious persecution or other First Amendment issues.

One of the witnesses to testify, former Black Hebrew Alvin Scott, 36, described how the Black Hebrews are organized. At the top is Ben Ami Carter, also known as Rabbi, who founded the group in Chicago in the mid-1960s and directs the sect from Dimona, Israel, a town in the Negev Desert that

Black Hebrews regard as the "spiritual capital of the world."

Under Carter are the 12 Nacim, also called princes or apostles, one of whom is Brown, whose Hebrew name is Prince Asiel Ben Israel. Below them are the Sahroom, officials who run many of The Nation's outposts in this country, Israel, Ghana and Liberia.

Crown Brothers and Crown Sisters make up the next level in the hierarchy, and below them are the everyday members of the sect, called Brothers and Sisters or Saints.

The Black Hebrews, who trace their ancestry to the original 12 Tribes of Israel, believe that the American way of life oppresses blacks and that through salvation they can be "delivered" to Israel.

The Israeli government does not recognize the Black Hebrews as Jews and has refused to recognize the legitimacy of the group's settlements. Perhaps because of this enmity, Black Hebrews in this country are sometimes allied with the followers of Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan.

The group teaches of a better life in Israel and regards Ben Ami Carter as the Black Moses. But Scott said living conditions in Israel were "very cramped"—worse than in Black Hebrew houses in this country, where 30 to 35 persons often live communally—and that sometimes there was not enough food.

Much of the money to support the sect's Israeli settlements came from items taken there from the United States, where, Scott said, they were purchased with worthless checks or fake credit cards.

Scott and Scarlett Smith, 33, also

a former Black Hebrew, described the shopping sprees they went on as part of their preparation for being "delivered" to Israel.

Scott, a native of Kankakee, Ill., testified that one of the first things he was instructed to do when he joined the Black Hebrews in 1977 was to open checking accounts. He eventually opened three, and over a four-month period he wrote more than \$40,000 in bad checks.

Other Black Hebrews told Scott what to buy, and his shopping list ranged from gold jewelry and expensive designer clothes and fabrics, always pure cotton, wool or silk—"only pure, Hebrews wear nothing synthetic," he explained—to everyday items such as deodorant.

"At first I was just scared," Scott said. He said he was told "what value it would be to The Nation, and that [a sect leader] would help me get out [go to Israel] earlier, help me get the things I needed and what others needed."

Smith, who grew up in San Antonio, testified that she was told to dress nicely when she went shopping in Dallas, where she lived with the Black Hebrews. She was told how to detect whether a special check verification system was being used. If she was asked to go to a store's credit department, Smith said, she was to leave the store.

Scott testified that many purchases were made on stolen or fake credit cards. He told the jury that several times he had delivered payments to a U.S. Postal Service employe who, he was told, took credit cards out of the mail before it was delivered.

But prosecutors contend that the

major source of income for the alleged crime ring was stolen airline tickets. Some of the tickets were allegedly sold.

Scott, Smith and Warren Bostic told the jury how they took airline flights on tickets provided by the Black Hebrews, tickets that sometimes bore the names of other persons. Their testimony was filled with descriptions of sect leaders traveling almost constantly among the various "extensions" of the sect in this country and overseas.

Scott and Smith testified that they frequently saw sect leader Warren Brown in Israel.

And Scott told the jury that he saw blank airline tickets being prepared and validated in a room of one of the Black Hebrew apartments in Chicago. Scott said he saw Brown there.

Bostic testified that while she lived in Liberia, a regular part of her job was to prepare airline tickets under the direction of a man she knew as Ben Kiel. Kiel's American name is Gerald Bethea, and he is among the nine persons on trial here.

Scott faces bad-check charges in Illinois, Smith was on probation for a passport violation, and Bostic pleaded guilty last week to conspiracy charges arising from the airline ticket theft and faces a possible five years in jail and a \$10,000 fine.

In recounting her involvement with the Black Hebrews, Bostic said she moved here with her three children in July 1980 from her home in New Haven, Conn., to join the sect. For the first few months the four lived with more than 20 other sect members in a house at 1428 Buchanan St. NW. Bostic did not work.

But by March 1981, Bostic said, the group was having "money problems" and many of its members had to seek employment.

Bostic quickly found a job at Diplomat Travel Service as an office assistant, and she soon began training there to become a travel agent.

In September 1981, she was summoned to the sect's headquarters in Chicago, where she was photographed and members made several pieces of identification bearing the name Gail Stewart. One of the group's leaders talked to her about the possibility that she might be able to get some of the agency's blank "ticket stock."

On Dec. 16, 1981, Diplomat received a shipment of blank tickets, but they arrived too late for placement in the agency's bank deposit box. That night, Bostic said, she had several telephone conversations with Black Hebrew officials and was told what to do the next day. After a night of little sleep, Bostic said, she got up at 6 a.m. and shortly after 7 a.m. she picked up the tickets at Diplomat. The assistant to the president of Diplomat Travel testified that the theft has cost his company more than \$85,000 and that some of the 400 tickets that were taken have not been used.

Accompanied by another Black Hebrew, Bostic said, she went to National Airport, where they boarded a shuttle for New York. About two hours after they checked into a New York motel, she said, she delivered the tickets to Yeriel.

After this testimony, Bostic stepped from the witness stand to point out to the jury James Stone, one of the defendants, as the man she knew as Yeriel.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date May 9, 1986
to Area Directors and Executive Assistants
from George E. Gruen, Director, Israel & Middle East Affairs
subject Guidelines for use of materials on Black Hebrew Israelites

If this issue draws the attention of your local press, we suggest the following:

1. Meet with and, as appropriate, share these materials with friendly local columnists and editorial writers.
2. Discuss and share them with friendly Black leaders.
3. Discuss them with your local CRC, Federation and Jewish community leaders, and use this information as the basis for preparing responses to inquiries that you receive and for correcting distortions that appear locally.

All of the materials sent to you may be made public except for the last paragraph of my April 23rd memo which begins, "I should add confidentially..."

P.S. Attached is the Newsday (May 9, 1986) article describing the arraignment of 11 Black Hebrews in Queens on child abuse charges.

86-580

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

11 of Queens Sect Indicted in Abuse

By Frances A. McMorris

Eleven members of an obscure religious cult called the Black Israelites were indicted and arraigned yesterday on 171 counts of abusing their own children.

At their arraignment in State Supreme Court in Kew Gardens yesterday, eight men and three women, some dressed in their religious garb of white robes with turbans, pleaded not guilty to charges that stem from incidents of beating, torturing and forcing their children to beg on the streets of Queens.

"Children are not chattel," Executive Assistant District Attorney Thomas Russo said. "They are people entitled to have their persons protected from criminal violence."

Queens District Attorney John Santucci called it the largest child abuse indictment in Queens history.

But it is not the first time that the Black Israelites have encountered the law. They are led from the Temple of Love, a 4,000-member chapter based in Miami, whose leader is Yahweh Ben Yahweh, a former member of the Black Muslims who was expelled for radicalism.

Yahweh, formerly Hulan Mitchell

Jr., preaches that he is the messiah and that whites are evil.

Members of the sect consider themselves Jews but believe Jesus was the son of God and that blacks are the Bible's chosen people. Mainstream Jewish organizations do not recognize them as Jews.

In Miami, authorities believe that the temple was responsible for the 1981 murders of two former members who left the group and spoke out against them. The decapitated body of one man was found within weeks after he left the group.

A second defector was placed in a government witness protection program after her boyfriend, also a defector, was shot dead.

In Michigan, a woman who belonged to the House of Judah, a different branch, was convicted for the 1983 beating death of her 12-year-old son. And last year in Chicago, the FBI arrested 35 members of a sect on charges of transporting stolen property.

But, until the Queens arrests after an April 5 police raid on two temple houses in South Jamaica, there was little attention paid to the sect. To neighbors of the Black Israelites, they seemed another offbeat religious group offering some kind of salvation.

But while the sect may have been salvation for some, authorities say it has been hell for some of its children.

The police raid was prompted by two young brothers who fled from the temples to their father's home in Brooklyn on March 19. They complained to their father of being forced to beg on the streets for money and said they were stripped naked and beaten with wooden switches if they failed to collect a required amount. Children also said hot sauce was rubbed in their cuts and adults threatened to mutilate their genitals. All of the children have been removed from the temples.

Two defendants, Heman Israel and Hadiyah Israel, were released but must return to court with the others on May 15. Bail set for the other nine defendants ranged from \$2,500 to \$250,000.

NEWSDAY, FRIDAY, MAY 9, 1986

NY

9

Readers write

Black Hebrews are fifth columnists

Dear Editor:

Your headline and article of March 22 "Say Israel Boots out Black Hebrew group" was very distorted and misleading. The article was more inflammatory than the subject matter. Tying the Black Hebrews with a strain in Black-Jewish relations was way off base. Let's set the facts straight:

Israel is deporting dozens of members of the Black Hebrew sect who are arriving from the U.S. to join their colleagues in the Negev desert.

Officials in Israel say that Black

Hebrews are American Blacks who plan on joining other sect members and illegally residing in Israel. They come to Israel with round trip airplane tickets. Upon arrival in Israel they tear up their American passports and threaten Israel with reprisals if they are deported. There are nearly 3,000 Black Hebrews in Israel, all of them without any official approval. The Black Hebrews are American Blacks who went to live in North Africa back in the 1960s. After being expelled from there they suddenly began believing that they were the original

Hebrews and that the people that call themselves Jews are imposters.

The Israeli Interior Ministry state that hundreds of Black Hebrews in America are getting ready to settle in Israel illegally.

As a result ministry officials are subjecting American Blacks to questioning as to the purpose of their visit to Israel. Those who are found to belong to be Black Hebrews are expelled upon arrival. Those who are not sect members are welcomed to Israel.

The Black Hebrews are led by Ben Ami Carter, who claims his sect comprises the original Jews. There is no basis of fact for this belief. The Black Hebrews have refused to leave Israel or convert to Judaism. They do not recognize the government of Israel, serve in the armed forces, or participate in the population census. In other words they are 5th columnists living in Israel.

Israel is the farthest thing from being racist. After all, there are Jews in Israel that came from over 70 countries speaking as many languages. They come in all races -- from white to Black. More so, Israel just welcomed over 10,000 Black Jews from Ethiopia to live in Israel.

"COME TO ISRAEL, COME STAY WITH FRIENDS" is a message that extends to all Americans including Blacks.

But no country, including Israel, will welcome people that seek to undermine its society or security. Blacks who have been to Israel can attest to the fact that Israel is a democracy that welcomes all tourists regardless of race, religion or creed. (I hope your newspaper won't be afraid to publish this opposing viewpoint).

Sincerely,
Geraldo Riojal
N.Y.C.

The irony is that after all of George's patchka-ing around with this issue, who ultimately produced a slick publication?
--ADL.





**ADL
RESEARCH
REPORT**

The Black Hebrew Israelites



Contents

	Page
The Black Hebrew Israelites	1
Introduction	1
Historical Background of the Black Hebrew Israelites	1
Philosophy and Beliefs of the Black Hebrew Israelites	2
Yahwehs	3
Racist and Anti-Semitic Statements	3
"False White Christianity"	4
Mitchell's "Proof" that Jews are Imposters	4
Personal Background of the Leader	5
Life in the Cult	6
Recruiting Trips	6
Defectors' Reports	7
Recent Criminal Indictments	7
Legal Actions Filed by the Yahwehs	7
Assets	8
Suicide Pact	8
Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem	9
Anti-Semitic Propaganda	9
Interview with Liberty Lobby's "Spotlight"	10
Personal Background of Ben Ami Carter	10
In Liberia	11
In Israel	11
Anti-Israel Propaganda by the Black Hebrews in the United States	12
Hostile Accusations	12
Black American Delegation	13
The Black Hebrews and Louis Farrakhan	14
Criminal Activities in the United States	14
Conclusion	15

The Black Hebrew Israelites

Introduction

In January, 1987, members of a Black Hebrew sect based in Chicago organized a protest in Washington, D.C. at the Mall to the Air and Space Museum, part of the Smithsonian Institute. The group erected a tent on the site and displayed signs that stated, in part:

"ZIONISM THE BIG LIE

The religious parties of Israel are systematically murdering Black Hebrews in the Holy Land. Israel, stop murdering us.

"Hundreds of black American children orphanized [sic] by the racist politics of Israel's religious parties.

"ISRAEL—ZIONIST TERRORISM."

One month earlier, a leader of that sect gave an interview to the *Spotlight*, published by the anti-Semitic Liberty Lobby, in which he stated:

"The Zionists control Congress to such an extent that no laws are passed that the Zionists don't approve. They control the major corporations and the banks, the whole economy."

At the same time, another Black Hebrew sect, this one based in Miami, has been publishing racist and anti-Semitic literature in promoting its doctrine of black racial superiority and its claim to being "the true original Jews of the Bible."

During the 1970's and the 1980's, these two separate and distinct—but similarly named—sects known as Black Hebrew Israelites have grown increasingly active in the United States. Their activities have caused widespread concern: members of both sects have been indicted for or convicted of serious crimes, and both have promoted propaganda that is blatantly racist and anti-Semitic.

Moreover, since the two sects see themselves as the true descendants of the Biblical Israelites, both reject the legitimacy of the State of Israel, claiming themselves to be the rightful inheritors of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. At the same time, each sect takes a different approach to the practical implementation of this philosophy, with only one of them seeking to establish an actual presence in Israel.

Most members of these sects are young and, for the most part, originate from impoverished urban neighborhoods in the United States. The leader of each sect demands full obedience and loyalty from his followers, and each is led by a charismatic figure claiming to be either the messiah, or God Himself.

Each sect leader has promised that any interference from without would result in his group's committing suicide, a threat reminiscent of events in Jonestown, Guyana in 1978, where leader Jim Jones led 900 followers in mass suicide.

It should be emphasized that these two sects are unrelated to the thousands of black Jews of Ethiopian origin, who are genuine members of the Jewish faith, and who have been welcomed to Israel in recent years, and resettled there.

Historical Background of the Black Hebrew Israelites

The origins of the Black Hebrew Israelite phenomenon are obscure. Some historians believe that the movement was begun prior to the Civil War by blacks who, because of the slave experience, found Christianity, the religion of the "white oppressor," to be unacceptable: they identified with the ancient Hebrews who suffered under the brutality of Egyptian slavery.

According to James Landing, a scholar who has studied Black Hebrews in the Chicago area, the Black Hebrew philosophy "represents the first sectarian-based brand of black nationalism in the U.S. which was not explicitly Christian and predates the Muslims. . ."

In 1896, a black chef on the Santa Fe Railroad, known as "Prophet" William S. Crowdy, founded a Black Hebrew sect in Kansas. He asserted that "the Lost Tribes of Israel were the forbears of American Negroes. At first, the ancient Hebrews were black, but through miscegenation had become white." According to Dr. Robert G. Weisbord, professor of history at the University of Rhode Island who has written on Afro-American history, many Black Hebrews look upon Crowdy as the intellectual father of their movement.¹

By World War I, Black Hebrew sects were found in such major cities as New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and Washington, D.C. Their teachings merged Christian beliefs with those of Judaism, adding strong overtones of black nationalism similar to that espoused by Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement.

Today, several Black Hebrew sects operate in the United States, Israel and several Third World countries. The two main divisions are the Miami-based "Yahwehs," led by Hulon Mitchell, Jr. also known as Moses Israel and the Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem, headed by Ben Ami Carter, which is headquartered in Chicago, Illinois and Dimona, Israel. (The other, much smaller sects are not discussed in this report.) These two groups are not affiliated, although their philosophies are similar.

Philosophy and Beliefs of the Black Hebrew Israelites

Both major branches of the Black Hebrew Israelites combine the themes of the Old and New Testaments with the messages of self-help and black supremacy. According to many published accounts, the Black Hebrews trace their lineage to Abraham, who, they say, was black, as were the other Hebrew Patriarchs. Members are taught that they are the "true" descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel and that white Jews are "imposters" and not the rightful inheritors of the Land of Israel. In addition, the Black Hebrew Israelites believe in Jesus Christ, and as noted, each sect believes that its leader combines both divine and messianic qualities.

The Black Hebrew Israelites permit polygamy; birth control is forbidden. Each leader decrees who will marry whom, performs marriages and approves annulments. Members follow strict dietary laws: meat, dairy, eggs and sugar are forbidden and members who are caught consuming these products are punished. Members are required to renounce their so-called "slave names" and adopt Hebraic names. Women hold subservient roles, and their main duties consist of child-rearing and other family obligations.

The sects isolate themselves from mainstream society and any alleged wrongdoing by a member is severely punished.

A detailed description of each group's background and activities follows.

¹According to Dr. Weisbord, among the more influential black nationalist clerics was Bishop Henry McNeal Turner of the independent black African Methodist Episcopal Church and the leading apostle of back-to-Africanism from the 1880's until his death in 1915. Turner proclaimed Jesus Christ was black (as was Adam), and claimed that "God is a Negro."

Yahwehs

During the late 1970's, a Black Hebrew Israelite organization was formed in Miami, Florida under the leadership of Hulon Mitchell, Jr., also known as Moses Israel. Since its inception, the group, also known as the Yahwehs (a term taken from a Hebrew name for God), has been steeped in controversy and, according to law enforcement authorities, involved in incidents of violence. Its main headquarters, known as the Temple of Love, is located in Miami. In the approximately eight years of the cult's existence, it has opened "temples" in 22 states and the District of Columbia.²

The Yahwehs use the King James version of the Bible (both Old and New Testaments), to which Moses Israel has added his own racist interpretations in parentheses. For example, a Yahweh newsletter stated:

"The earth (the black man) shall rise up against him (the white man)" (Job 20:27),
and

"White America, you shalt surely know that Yahweh is God of gods, and that Yahweh has heard all your blasphemies against the poor ignorant black man of America, who say, we are ruined, and given to white people to consume and KILL. **THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD YAHWEH: AS THOU DIDST REJOICE AT THE INHERITANCE OF** (the black man of America) **THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, BECAUSE IT** (the black man) **WAS DESOLATE** (and ruined), **SO WILL I DO UNTO THEE** (white people) (Ezekiel 35:11-15)."

The doctrines of the Yahwehs proclaim that blacks are the true descendants of the Hebrew Patriarchs and are the true inheritors of a part of "North Africa" known as Israel. According to another published statement:

"... All so-called Blacks of America are Hebrew Israelites, Yahweh's chosen people; our history, culture and language is Hebrew; our last name is Israel and the Holy Land, a tiny part called Israel today is our inheritance for ever (Revelations 3:9; Genesis 13:15)."

"All of the wars in the Middle East and on Earth," asserted Mitchell, "are because we are not ruling Jerusalem."

Racist and Anti-Semitic Statements

A central theme of the Yahwehs has been black racial superiority and hatred of whites. As a way of spreading the "word," Mitchell writes a newsletter entitled "Yahweh" which combines scriptural references with violent rhetoric about whites, white Jews and "Uncle Toms"—blacks who refuse to follow him. He calls white men "mutations of the original Black man," and has referred to unconverted blacks as "mentally blind," and Jews as "imposters." "I teach everyone is the devil," Mitchell has stated.

During a Richmond, Virginia rally, Mitchell declared:

"If you don't have sense enough to return to your God, they're [whites] going to beat you and kill you. White people know Yahweh chose them to continue punishing you if you continue to reject him." [sic]

²Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Among the Yahweh newsletters (which are usually undated) was this quote:

"Yahweh gave our white enemies 6,000 years to rule good or bad. Their history proves them evil, wicked liars and murderers. . . THIS WHITE MAN WITH HIS TRICKS MUST BE REMOVED."

In the Yahweh newsletter entitled "Wake Up Blacks, Whites Daily Plan Our Death," Mitchell wrote:

"OUR GREAT, GOOD AND TERRIBLE BLACK GOD, YAHWEH wants us to KNOW the truth about white people and THIS truth will make us totally free (John 83:1-5; Leviticus 26:17). We must come to understand that THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE between white Klansmen, white police, white government and white people's religion. WHITE PEOPLE ARE FULL OF DECEIT AND TRICKS." (Emphasis in original)

In "The End Is Come Upon America" Mitchell wrote:

"Our GREAT, GOOD AND TERRIBLE BLACK GOD, YAHWEH is after America and is ready to pay her double for her mistreatment of her ignorant black slaves. THE END IS COME UPON AMERICA! White people's plans to kill black people only hastens her doom."

One Yahweh newsletter entitled "Concentration Camps for Blacks" asserted that the White House was setting up concentration camps for blacks at four military installations. The newsletter stated, "The Hitler death camps was a nice little party in light of what the white man plans for DARK SKINNED PEOPLE."

"False White Christianity"

The Yahweh newsletter on "Concentration Camps for Blacks" added:

"Look at the white man's FALSE CHRISTIANITY. . . this white devil did not want our people to STRIKE BACK AT HIM. Therefore these white devils condemned an eye for an eye and life for life in their false white Christian religion because our 50 million black people might get a life for life.

"If white people pluck out our eyes, we should try and pluck out theirs. But we have been made such harmless slaves by the false teachings of a white-slave making religion called Christianity, which teaches us to love our WHITE ENEMIES, not to strike back, but to turn the other cheek.

"False white Christianity teaches us to give freedom to our white robbers. 'IF WHITE PEOPLE TAKE OUR COAT THEN GIVE THEM OUR PANTS ALSO. HELP WHITE PEOPLE TO ROB OUR POOR IGNORANT PEOPLE. ENRICH THE THIEF' That is the kind of religion that we are taught to believe. Our GREAT, GOOD AND TERRIBLE BLACK CREATOR, YAHWEH, wants us to know false white Christianity is slavery teachings."

Mitchell's "Proof" that Jews are Imposters

As a consequence of the Yahwehs' claim that they are the true Biblical Israelites, Mitchell has repeatedly asserted that white Jews are imposters.

In a Yahweh newsletter entitled "'Jesus and 'Jehovah Do Not Exist—The Son of Almighty YAHWEH DOES EXIST," Mitchell delved into one of his reasons why white Jews are imposters. According to Mitchell, this "is a fact, provable by the historical no[n]existence of the letter 'j'

in the Hebrew language. You cannot trust in anybody with the name 'j.' Those who say they are Jews are liars (Revelations 3:9)." The newsletter added:

"Our Saviour was born a Hebrew Israelite (falsely called 'j'ew)."

The newsletter further stated:

"The name 'J'ew in the Bible IS THE WHITE MAN'S SUBSTITUTE FOR HEBREW. This is the white man's 'trick' to try and fool and deceive the world into believing that the Bible legitimizes 'J.' They have tried to 'STEAL' our 'INHERITANCE' cutting us off from the knowledge of OUR TRUE HISTORY (Psalms 85:1-5)."

Mitchell's violent comments concerning black leaders who do not subscribe to his tenets can be seen from Yahweh newsletters. From "Black Leadership & YAHWEH:"

"O my people, this is the ACCEPTABLE year of Yahweh. Yahweh is warning all BLIND FALSE BLACK LEADERS, stop miseducating and misleading our people or suffer a terrible destruction. Yahweh is not mocked (Galatians 6:7). . . BLIND FALSE BLACK LEADERS are circulating among us nationwide with FALSE IDEAS. . . We are aware of the selfish motives of BLIND FALSE BLACK LEADERS at our expense. Yahweh has always destroyed the wicked from among us (Job 20:5)." (Emphasis original)

In the Yahweh newsletter "YAHWEH Says Don't Worship White People," Mitchell stated:

"If any black man worship the beast and his image and take the mark (666), or has a white man's name, the same shall be tormented in HELL for ever and ever (Revelation 13:15-18; 14:9-11). . . It is indicated in the book of Revelations that all but 144,000 of the so-called black men of American [sic] will accept our white enemy and go down in a lake of fire with him (Revelation chapter 7)."

In the Yahweh newsletter entitled "Don't Murder Your Baby," Mitchell discussed white America's "guilt" for black abortions:

"CHRISTIANS PLOT, PLAN AND APPROVE OF MURDERING TWO MILLION OF OUR BABIES. . . Have you noticed that OUR FALSE LEADERS are not marching against the murder of our babies? Maybe we would be free by now if all of OUR FALSE LEADERS were aborted."

Personal Background of the Leader

Moses Israel was born Hulon Mitchell, Jr. in 1935. He was raised in the segregated central Oklahoma town of Enid—where the Ku Klux Klan recruited on the steps of Enid High School. The eldest of fifteen children, he was raised in a strict fundamentalist Pentecostal church led by his father, a black laborer and lay preacher.

Mitchell was a baritone in the family's traveling gospel show known as the Musical Mitchells. After graduating from high school, he attended a junior college in Texas and enlisted in the Air Force. Following his discharge, Mitchell attended Phillips University in Enid from which he graduated in 1960 with a degree in psychology. He participated in early civil rights sit-ins and joined a mystical cult called the Rosicrucians. He married for the first time; he and his wife were divorced four years later.

Soon afterwards, Mitchell remarried (this marriage was later dissolved) and moved to Atlanta where he earned a master's degree in economics at Atlanta University in 1965. It was in Atlanta that Mitchell joined the Black Muslims and changed his name to Hulon Shah. (The Black Muslim movement was founded by Elijah Muhammed during the 1930's as a black supremacy movement

which preached a philosophy of black self-help and racial superiority.)³ By the mid 1960's, Mitchell headed the Black Muslims in Atlanta.

During the 1970's Mitchell, changing his name to Father Michel, founded the Modern Christian Church in Atlanta, where he preached his own Bible interpretations. The church later disbanded.

Mitchell arrived in Miami in the late 1970's where he founded the Yahwehs, changed his name to Moses Israel, and declared himself Yahweh ben Yahweh (God, son of God). He has claimed to be the historical Jesus Christ; he has also claimed to be the second coming of the Messiah, in addition to his claim of being God himself.

During a December, 1986 interview with the *New York Times* at the Temple of Love headquarters, Mitchell proclaimed: "I am the Messiah, I am the Word, I am Incarnate. All who receive me shall be saved from immortality and death." [sic]

Mitchell's family and his father in particular have commented on his claims to being the son of God. Hulon Mitchell, Sr. stated:

"I was there when he was born, holding his mama's hand. You can't get closer than that, and he is not the son of God."

Life in the Cult

Upon entering the cult, members are taught to worship the "great, good and terrible black God, Yahweh," whom members claim to be "the divine supreme being of righteousness." Cult members are also taught that they are the "true" descendants of Israel and, thus, white Jews represent the "syngagogue of Satan."

Hatred for whites has been a constant theme of the group's doctrine. Mitchell has claimed that all disbelievers (whether white or black—the latter he calls "Uncle Toms") are devils: "The dictionary defines devil as an adversary of God. If you are an opponent of mine, then you would be classified as a devil." He stated, in one sermon, that "the so-called black people of America are the true followers of Yahweh, of the tribe of Judah, chosen to be the chief ruler forever." The motto of the Yahwehs is "One God, one mind."

All members pay tithes and are encouraged to purchase the sect's literature and tapes. Many members turn over their homes and cars to the group. The *Miami Herald*, in November 1986, reported that up to 300 female members of the cult had been receiving monthly checks of between \$200 and \$300 under a program providing money to families with dependent children where the father is not present. Law enforcement officials alleged that these funds were being turned over to the cult.

Meetings at the temple are held twice a week where members are searched for weapons before entering. Mitchell is always surrounded by bodyguards expert in the martial arts; the guards are called the Circle of Ten.

Recruiting Trips

Yahweh representatives travel throughout the United States, organizing rallies to seek new recruits. Their efforts are generally aimed at poorer blacks, although the group does include some more affluent members in its ranks.

In the past few years, the Yahwehs, along with Mitchell, have appeared in Madison Square Garden in New York City to an audience of 1,500 people; in Kansas City to 1,200; St. Louis,

³See ADL Facts, "Louis Farrakhan" (Spring 1984).

2,000; and Chicago, 3,000. At each function, Mitchell delivers the message that he is Yahweh ben Yahweh, stating "I am the one the whole earth has been waiting for." At the St. Louis rally, a spokesman for the group said that the sect "is establishing Yahweh universities where our children will learn to be world rulers."

Defectors' Reports

The *Miami Herald* of December 17, 1981 reported that former members of the cult, and police, have claimed that Mitchell uses brainwashing techniques, such as forcing members to listen to tape recordings for long periods of time, and feeding them low protein diets. One former member charged that the Yahwehs acted "like zombies. I could see how he was controlling the minds of the people." She also claimed that her husband had wanted to teach reading classes but Mitchell refused his request because, as she said, "With reading, you could understand the indoctrination." That indoctrination sometimes included beatings, according to former members.

Defectors have also characterized the Yahwehs as a hate group that condemns all whites as "evil, wicked, savage beasts." Many defectors have reportedly gone into hiding.

Recent Criminal Indictments

On April 5, 1986, police raided two South Jamaica, New York temple houses that were used by the Yahwehs. Eleven people were arrested and indicted for torturing children who allegedly failed to meet the cult's daily financial soliciting quotas. Investigators said that the children were beaten, had hot barbecue sauce poured into open wounds and were threatened with castration if they didn't bring in more money. A spokesman for the Queens County District Attorney has stated that this case is still pending.

On October 28, 1986, the Yahwehs bought an Opa-locka, Florida apartment complex and ordered the tenants evicted immediately. Following a 38-hour stand-off between the cult members and the tenants (who had refused to leave without an official eviction notice), two tenants were shot to death. Police arrested one cult member who was indicted for murder. Florida law enforcement authorities have stated they intend to bring the case to trial. In a statement which suggests that he did not condone the killings, the Yahwehs' leader recently stated that, should the accused member be convicted, he would be excommunicated from the sect.

Legal Actions Filed by the Yahwehs

The Yahwehs filed a class action suit in 1983 against the Florida Department of Corrections on behalf of their 75 to 100 imprisoned members—and in particular, one handicapped prisoner. They charged that the prisoners were unable to practice their religion and, thus, their First Amendment right to freedom of religion had been violated. Prison officials have claimed the right to remove and ban materials that they deem potentially violent in the prisons.

In 1986, U.S. District Judge Sidney Aronovitz ruled that the Yahwehs are to be given "the same rights and privileges . . . that are enjoyed by inmates of other faiths." Additionally, he ordered state authorities to allow the Hebrew Israelites to use prison chapels for their services.

In August, 1986, the Yahwehs were informed that they must abide by an ordinance requiring that people who solicit door-to-door in Delray Beach, Florida obtain City Council approval. The American Civil Liberties Union attorney representing the cult contended that parts of the city application process violated the Yahwehs' constitutional right to freedom of religion. The approval form included questions about how and where the group's money is spent. This case is as yet undecided.

Assets

In the short time of the Yahwehs' existence, they have grown into a multi-million dollar organization with businesses and real estate in Dade and Broward counties in Florida.

Beginning in July, 1981 when their headquarters, Temple of Love, Inc. in Liberty City, Miami was incorporated, they have bought up abandoned buildings in poor black areas, and acquired a fleet of used buses, tractor trailers, and a Lincoln stretch limousine.

The Temple of Love houses a religious sanctuary, bookstore, modern printing plant, dormitory, offices, ice cream store and a market for natural foods and sundries. Some of the products sold are Yahweh's Messiah Cologne, Yahweh Natural Hair Food and Might Black Man Comics. In addition, the sect's newsletters regularly promote the sale of Yahweh Tee-shirts and record albums.

The Dade courthouse records show the Temple of Love, Inc. signed a \$420,000 mortgage on the building in 1983. Earlier, in 1982, the Yahwehs purchased a warehouse from which they operate a vehicle maintenance and modification facility. Their fleets of used buses and tractor trailers are brought to this warehouse where members paint all of the vehicles white and print on them, in black lettering, "YAHWEH" in both English and Hebrew. In 1982, the business was incorporated into the Exodus Housing Co-op, Inc. This warehouse also houses the Yahweh International Center, according to a sign on the outside. The mortgage for this warehouse, which was taken out in 1985, is \$491,000.

In November, 1984 two adjacent lots to the Temple of Love were purchased by the group. Another warehouse was purchased in Miami which contains several small businesses for which the group signed an \$815,384 mortgage. In October, 1985 the group purchased a former church for \$975,000. It is now the Yahweh Education Center.

The Dade County mortgages total well over \$2 million. In addition to the holdings in Dade, at least two sites in Broward County are owned by the Yahwehs: apartments in Hallandale and a temple in Hollywood. Additionally the group owns the apartment complex in Opa-locka and their "temples" throughout Florida and out of state, making it apparent that this sect is expanding.

Suicide Pact

In a recent book, published by the Yahwehs, entitled *You Are Not a Nigger: Our True History; the World's Best Kept Secret*, Mitchell "discusses" suicide—a message that is reminiscent of the Jonestown suicides in the late 1970's. A passage in the book declared:

"It is better for us to just go and commit suicide than to allow the enemy to come in our homes and drag us down, drag our mothers and daughters out, beat, lynch and rape them while we stand looking."

The book went on to state:

"If we continue to accept injustice, we are nothing but cowards. If we be cowards, then we ought to go home, kill our wives and then commit suicide."

Mitchell broached the subject of suicide and blind obedience at a meeting, stating (according to the July 13, 1981 *Miami Herald*):

"How many would die for Yahweh?" Everybody raised their hands. "How many would kill for Yahweh?" Again, all hands went up.

In January, 1987, Mitchell called a press conference in Miami in which he projected more positive themes. According to the *Miami Herald*, the sect was "attempting to shed its image as

a hate group." At the conference, which took place during a "convention" of Yahweh representatives from several U.S. cities, Mitchell discussed Yahweh teachings on charity, prayer and peace. Without repudiating the sect's past doctrine of considering whites as "devils," he did acknowledge the existence of "white people who do not share a racist, hate-filled philosophy."

In addition, Mitchell had this to say about his fellow blacks in the U.S., and the sect's view of its role in their lives:

"You know that my people, who are called black people in America, are guilty of . . . breaking all of Yahweh's laws, of burglary, of rape, of robbery and destruction of their communities, of turning even a nice area into a ghetto. Filthy and dirty, vile conversations—a dirty mouth. No respect for anybody's family or womanhood. This is the way my people have been taught and trained and this is the way they are. So they are lost.

"So the savior has to come and demonstrate his saving power by taking a savage people, and reforming them, redeeming them, saving them from their own destruction."

Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem

The Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem was founded by Ben Ami Carter in Chicago in the early 1960's. By far the largest of the Black Hebrew sects, it also differs from the other groups in that it is the first to have sent members to Israel. Headquartered in Chicago and Dimona, Israel, the group claims to have communities in many major cities in the U.S., several towns in Israel, Liberia, Ghana and Kenya.

The group has been steeped in controversy and involved in incidents of violence and criminality. Additionally, the cult has engaged in anti-Semitic and anti-Israel propaganda. Carter preaches that the Black Hebrews are the true Jews descended from the Lost Tribes of Israel and that the Promised Land, situated in "Northeast Africa" (Israel), belongs to the black people of the world. The group's goal is to bring all black people back to the land of their birthright (i.e., Israel). In order to make room for them, Carter has called for the emigration of the "false" Jews back to their countries of origin, e.g., Poland, Russia, Morocco etc.

Anti-Semitic Propaganda

The sect's materials and public statements have reflected vicious anti-Semitism. For example, the *New York Times* of March 22, 1981 reported the following Black Hebrew comment:

"The Jews carry out the very same kind of abominable deeds which *they claim* Hitler perpetrated. . . Let us tear away the veil from these Israeli criminals." (Emphasis added)

Other materials published by the sect have reportedly contained such statements as:

- "Menachem Begin—the spirit of Hitler."
- "Money is the God of the sinful, white Jewish dogs."
- "\$800 million collected by the United Jewish Appeal was in most part stolen from the blacks by money-grabbing Jewish merchants."

According to the May 9, 1984 *Jerusalem Post*, "Defectors claim that racism and anti-Semitism are rife" within the Black Hebrew community. Shaleak Ben-Yehuda (one of Carter's "princes") has written that "the *Holocaust was a lie perpetuated by Jews* and that the blacks are the true Israelites." (Emphasis added) According to the *Post* account, defectors charged that the cult's children were "taught to hate"—and that they are "afraid of whites."

Interview with Liberty Lobby's "Spotlight"

The December 9, 1986 issue of *Spotlight* included an interview with Dr. Haraymiel Ben Shaleak, a high-ranking member of the Black Hebrews. *Spotlight* is the weekly publication of the Washington, DC-based Liberty Lobby, which is probably the leading extreme right, anti-Semitic propaganda organization in the United States. Liberty Lobby is headed by longtime anti-Semite Willis A. Carto, who is also the prime mover in the "Institute for Historical Review" (IHR), a pseudo-academic organization that is the prime source of Holocaust-denial propaganda in the United States. The IHR's activities are frequently promoted by *Spotlight*.

Described as the director of public affairs for the Washington office of the Black Hebrews' international staff, Dr. Ben Shaleak expressed anti-Semitic and anti-Israel sentiments.

In the *Spotlight* interview, Ben Shaleak stated:

"I propose an alliance between my community and those Whites in America who want justice, who want patriotism, who want freedom and who love God. Together what we can do is we can work to end Zionism."

Concerning the issue of the Law of Return in Israel, Ben Shaleak said:

"I want to be clear about one thing: The definition of 'who is a Jew' . . . is determined by a small handful of European-born Jews who are, for the most part, extremists, racists, and who are, in fact, communists. . . ."

He added:

"This is the same faction that Jesus had difficulty with. In His day they were called the pharisees. Today they follow the Talmud."

Ben Shaleak praised the *Spotlight* for being one of the few papers not controlled by Zionists and declared:

"If it weren't for papers like the *Spotlight* bringing out information, people would otherwise be forced to listen to ABC, CBS, NBC and the Washington 'Post.' The American people would receive no information except for that which is approved by the Zionists. And that's horrendous.

"This is the reason why people who know the truth and who understand this should be banding together.

"You see, Zionists feel no need to negotiate just solutions to any problems with anybody because they are the king of the roost. There is an arrogance that exists that won't allow them to negotiate in good faith with the Palestinians or to sit down and dialogue with the Hebrew Israelites in good faith—or anything."

Finally Ben Shaleak stated:

"The Hebrew Israelites are fighting everybody's battle because we understand that everybody is a victim of Zionism."

Basic to an understanding of the problems posed in the U.S. by the Chicago-based Black Hebrew sect—particularly the hostility reflected in their anti-Israel propaganda—is an examination of the personal history of the group's leader, and the background of Black Hebrew activities in Israel, where the group has sought to manifest its Biblical interpretations.

Personal Background of Ben Ami Carter

Ben Ami Carter, according to most reports, was born Ben Carter (although some reports have stated that his name was originally Gerson Parker) 47 years ago in Chicago, the son of Baptist

parents. He dropped out of Marshall High School and obtained employment as a foundry worker and sometime truck driver.

In 1960, Carter began attending meetings of the Original Hebrew Israelite Nation. Allegedly influenced by Prophet Casey of the Abetta Hebrew Cultural Centre in Chicago, and impressed by the explanation that Black Hebrews were the direct descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he began to study in earnest. His teachers, who were called "rabbis" within the sect, spoke of how the Black Hebrew Israelites had been exiled from Israel for their sins, and condemned to wander throughout Africa until they were kidnapped and sold into slavery, through which means they arrived in America.

In 1962, Carter was ordained a "rabbi" and renamed Ben Ami Carter (in Hebrew, Ben Ami translates as son of my people or nation). With the announcement that God had instructed him to lead his people to the Promised Land, he parted with the Black Hebrew group he had studied with and organized a small group of blacks into the Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem.

During the group's early years, the members preached their message in the Chicago streets and took donations from store merchants and passersby. By the mid 1960's, Carter had gained a following, and among his followers he was referred to as the "messiah," "divine prince of princes," "father," and "master."

The racial unrest of this period in many American communities was interpreted by Carter as evidence that Armageddon would soon destroy the United States. Blacks, he said, would be saved by going to the land of their birthright—"Northeast Africa"—and there to be led by their messiah, Ben Ami Carter. The group began preparations for their move to Liberia, which Carter referred to as a "purifying" stop. By July, 1967, every member had sold his belongings and turned the money over to Carter. Four months later, in November, 1967, Carter led approximately 160 people to Liberia.

In Liberia

After arriving in Liberia, the Black Hebrews established themselves on a 300 acre site near Gbatallah, about 80 miles from Liberia's capital city of Monrovia. They cleared the land, constructed buildings and operated sundry enterprises.

Initially, the Black Hebrews were welcomed in Liberia, although the Liberians were confused by their identity. As time went on, however, it became clear that the cult refused to assimilate into the general population. Liberian Attorney-General James A.A. Pierre charged that the Black Hebrews had no intention of working and becoming useful citizens of that country. Carter later stated that the group only went to Liberia to cleanse themselves of their brief period of bondage in the U.S. by throwing off the shackles of "niggertism." [sic]

While relations between the Liberian government and citizens and the Black Hebrews became more and more strained, Carter, following the advice of Charles Blackwell (a member of his group who had been sent to Israel in late 1967 "to spy out the land like a modern day Joshua," as one account put it), went to visit Israel in 1968. Carter returned to Liberia; he would begin moving his group to Israel the next year.

In Israel

As happened in Liberia, the Black Hebrew group was initially welcomed, although their identity confused Israeli immigration officials. The group attempted to immigrate under the Law of Return, which grants every Jew the right to settle in Israel. Because Israeli officials were unsure

of the Black Hebrews' status, the Minister of the Interior admitted the group as temporary residents and settled them in the Negev town of Dimona. Then the Ministry, responsible for determining the status of all who enter Israel, began to investigate the group.

Israel's Chief Rabbinate ruled that they were not Jews and not eligible for citizenship under the Law of Return. The Black Hebrews nevertheless stayed on even though their tourist visas had expired. The government of Israel elected not to evict them, but not to grant them citizenship or permanent residency status either.

The community, centered in Dimona in southern Israel, grew in the 1970's partially through natural increase and partially through the illegal entry of other Black Hebrews—some of whom had criminal records in the U.S. Over the years, as this problem and the frictions it generated continued, the Black Hebrews engaged in frequent anti-Israel propaganda attacks.

Anti-Israel Propaganda by the Black Hebrews in the United States

Since the mid 1970's, Ben Ami Carter's followers in America have engaged in a concerted anti-Israel campaign. In September 1977, Prince Asiel Ben Israel, the Black Hebrews' second-ranking leader, who has been described as "international ambassador" for the cult, charged the Israeli government with racism for deporting 16 Black Hebrews. Awaiting the group's arrival at Kennedy Airport in New York, Prince Asiel vowed: "We are going to stay at the airport until justice is done and we can accomplish the right of black people to migrate to Israel." After the 16 arrived in New York, the group, including Prince Asiel, staged a sit-in at the airport and called upon President Jimmy Carter to send a black delegation to Israel to investigate the incident. Calling for a "full boycott of Israel, its products and its tourist ventures," Prince Asiel said: "The State of Israel is racist to the core."

Hostile Accusations

In May 1984, Prince Asiel Ben Israel called a press conference in Chicago, where the sect originated. Among those sitting at the dais with Asiel was Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, soon to become widely known for his anti-Semitic extremism. With a large banner in the background proclaiming: "Black Hebrews are not welcome in Israel! End Racism in Israel," Asiel gave a statement to the press, entitled "We charge racial discrimination against Black Hebrews living in Israel." He claimed that the very lives of 2,500 members of the Black Hebrew community were in imminent danger. He talked of "racist elements in the Israeli government."

Others joining Prince Asiel at the press conference included Chicago Alderman Allan Streeter; Warith Deen Muhammad of the American Muslim Mission; Conrad Worrill, head of the National Black United Front; Thomas Todd, a Chicago attorney and former acting president of Operation Push; and Lewis Myers, attorney for the Black Hebrews who has also represented Louis Farrakhan.

In an implied threat to Jews, Asiel said: "As these events unfold in Israel and in the Jewish community in the United States, a clear pattern emerges. We read your offensive signals very clearly, and we hope you read ours as clearly." Asiel went on to say: "We refuse to accept the mass removal or the mass murder of our people ever again! Any threats, real or imagined, against our brothers and sisters living anywhere in this world will be taken as an affront against all Black people."

Asiel's press conference came at a time when American Jewish groups had been meeting with Asiel and other representatives of his community over the years to solve the dilemma.

In 1986, when Israel began to expel members of the sect who had been charged in the U.S. with racketeering and fraud, Black Hebrews in America staged demonstrations in front of Israeli

consulates in Washington, D.C., Atlanta, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles as well as at the White House. As recently as January, 1987, the group staged sit-ins outside the offices of Jewish organizations in Washington, D.C., including the Washington Jewish Community Council and the United Jewish Appeal, and they have demonstrated at the headquarters of B'nai B'rith International.

At a news conference in August 1986, a spokesman for the group called for the termination of the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel. According to the Washington *Afro-American* of August 23, 1986, some of the demands made by the group included:

- 1) \$500 million to compensate the group for the loss of lives and the breaking up of Black Hebrew families,
- 2) termination of U.S. aid to Israel,
- 3) withdrawal of U.S. support of Jewish efforts to resolve the issue of Soviet Jewry,
- 4) termination of all immigration to Israel by the world community,
- 5) termination of all U.S. trade agreements with Israel.

Additionally, the group has passed out leaflets accusing the Israeli government of using terror tactics on the Black Hebrews. One such leaflet, handed out in Atlanta, stated:

"ISRAELI GOVERNMENT DECLARES WAR ON HEBREW ISRAELITES

"On April 18, 1986 at 2:00 A.M., 250 heavily armed Israeli Paramilitary Forces raided, attacked and kidnapped 46 Black Hebrew men, women, and children from a fruit packing farm in Rechovot, Israel.

"Moving under the cover of the smoke still rising from the U.S. Government attack on Libya where all the world's eyes and press are focused, we are convinced that the Israeli Government is attempting to exterminate these Black men, women, and children.

"Where are the Hebrew 46? Have they been killed or injured by the Israeli Government's state sponsored terrorism?

"Presently over 2,500 Black Hebrew Israelites remain under surveillance by the FBI, the Mossad and Israeli troops. A wholesale slaughter is imminent."

Black American Delegation

It should be noted that in 1981, a delegation of prominent Black Americans had gone to Israel to investigate the problem and concluded that while the problem was complex, it clearly was not a case of racism. The delegation, which included Bayard Rustin of the A. Philip Randolph Education Fund, Alexander J. Allen of the National Urban League, Lewis J. Carter III of the NAACP and Mrs. Arthur Logan of the National Council of Negro Women, reported:

"From all the evidence we have heard, including that from the Black Hebrew community, we conclude that official racism plays no part in this sensitive problem. The initial welcome given to the Black Hebrews and the offer of conversion clearly support that conclusion. The general agreement is that official difficulties stem from deep-seated religious, philosophical, and political differences."

A column by Bayard Rustin reporting on the mission to Israel, published in the *New York Amsterdam News* of February 28, 1981 noted:

"Israel is an embattled country, surrounded by enemies. Yet its democratic traditions give us confidence that the matter of the Black Hebrews will be dealt with humanely."

To sum up: With regard to the Carter sect's anti-Israel charges, it is to be noted that the Black Hebrews are not Jews and not eligible for citizenship under Israel's Law of Return. For about 15

years, therefore, they have been living in Israel as illegal immigrants. International law recognizes that every government has the sovereign right to decide for itself who qualifies for citizenship and residency and who does not.

The Black Hebrews and Louis Farrakhan

Louis Farrakhan, anti-Semitic leader of the Nation of Islam, has been a supporter of Ben Ami Carter and the Black Hebrews, and the sect in turn has had a favorable relationship with him. In an interview with journalist Edwin Black, as reported in the February 21, 1986 *Long Island Jewish World*, Farrakhan spoke of their relationship. He told of first meeting with Carter in 1978 while visiting Israel. When explaining the differences between the beliefs of the Black Hebrews and those of the Muslims, Farrakhan stated: "We have shared beliefs in that we believe that God has chosen us to be the cornerstones of a new world government." Prince Asiel Ben Israel and other high-ranking members of the Black Hebrews have attended conferences sponsored by Farrakhan, whose anti-Semitic mouthings have been widely noted in recent years.⁴

According to the April, 1985 issue of Farrakhan's publication *The Final Call*, Prince Asiel attended the Nation of Islam's annual Saviour's Day celebration in February, 1985 in which he participated in various panels focusing on such issues as "Liberation: The Universal Struggle," "Universal Theology For Liberation: Part I" and "International Zionism." Edwin Black also interviewed Ben Ami Carter who, when asked about his relationship with Farrakhan, stated: "We're friends. He's a Muslim, I'm an Israelite; we keep in contact. We compare teachings and prophecies. We have a close dialogue."

Criminal Activities in the United States

From 1975 through 1977, the FBI, U.S. postal inspectors, the U.S. Treasury Department and the Chicago Police Department conducted an investigation into an alleged Black Hebrew network that included the swindling of banks and theft of credit cards, checks and identification papers. During the course of the investigation, it was alleged that members of the sect had stolen between \$6 million and \$10 million from banks and supermarkets in a period of two years.

According to the April 3, 1977 *Chicago Tribune*, a member of the "prosecution team" charged that as part of the alleged scheme, the Black Hebrews would get jobs as postal clerks, bank tellers, grocery clerks and currency exchange cashiers where they had access to welfare checks, blank checks, travelers checks and other documents.

Prince Asiel Ben Israel (also known as Warren Brown) disavowed any connection with those responsible for the thefts. He stated "We've never had any criminal element."

However, on May 26, 1981 a federal grand jury indicted three Black Hebrew members, charging them with transporting and receiving stolen securities, wire fraud, passport fraud and cashing forged checks and savings bonds. According to the U.S. Attorney's office in Chicago, four Chicago banks were bilked in the scheme, and that the three men, all fugitives, were believed to have gone to either Israel, Liberia or Ghana. In October, 1986, one of the fugitives, who was later taken into custody, was convicted of the transportation and receipt of stolen securities. In a related development, in January, 1987 another member of the Black Hebrews pleaded guilty to embezzling \$520,000 from a Chicago bank.

In July, 1985, the FBI arrested Prince Asiel Ben Israel and 31 other cult members. The charges

⁴See also ADL Facts, "Louis Farrakhan—An Update" (Spring 1985) and ADL Special Report, "Louis Farrakhan: In His Own Words" (October, 1985).

included trafficking in stolen airline tickets, identity cards and passports. By September, they were all indicted by a federal grand jury in Washington, D.C.

The trial, which began in March, 1986, involved dozens of witnesses, including several defectors from the cult. According to the *Washington Post*, one defector revealed that Prince Asiel had told him to open numerous checking accounts and to try to get as many credit cards as possible. He said he was then told to purchase items that could be resold—most of the money was used to support the cult in Israel. Another defector, who worked for a travel service asserted that she was told to steal as many blank airline tickets as she could. The tickets were used to fly members all over the country and to their other bases in Israel, Liberia and Ghana, she testified.

The trial, which was one of the longest in Washington, D.C.'s history, concluded in September, 1986. Four cult members were found guilty and sentenced to 10 to 30 years in prison for operating a multimillion dollar international crime ring. Among the four was Prince Asiel Ben Israel.

Conclusion

Since the founding of the Miami-based Yahwehs almost eight years ago by the former Hulon Mitchell Jr., the sect has promoted anti-Semitic and racist views, and several of its members have been indicted for alleged involvement in criminal activities. Concern has also been expressed during the last 15 years about the anti-Semitism and anti-Israel propaganda of the Chicago and Israel-based Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem led by Ben Ami Carter.

The teachings, by both groups, of black racism and their religiously based claim that blacks are the chosen people and the rightful heirs of the Promised Land have attracted to each sect, according to knowledgeable observers, as many as several thousand followers. Their coercive tactics and prejudiced public statements have proved troubling to many other people, both black and white.

It is interesting to note that the Black Hebrew philosophy that Jews are not the true Israelites of biblical prophecy is strikingly similar to the theme of white right-wing extremists in the racist and anti-Semitic "Identity Church" movement. Whereas "Identity" followers believe that "Aryans" of northern European stock are the "Chosen People," both Black Hebrew sects contend that blacks deserve that description.⁵

These two sects, separate yet sharing certain philosophical and ideological characteristics, continue to promote doctrines of black racial superiority and anti-Jewish hostility that pose a disturbing challenge to intergroup understanding and cooperation in a pluralistic society.

⁵The "Identity Church" phenomenon is a pseudo-Christian movement which holds that white Anglo-Saxons, not Jews, are the "true Israel," and God's chosen people. Among the basic tenets of this movement's "theology" of hate are vicious hostility toward non-white races and relentless vilification of Jews. See ADL Facts, "The 'Identity Churches': A Theology of Hate" (Spring 1983) and see ADL's "Extremism on the Right"—A Handbook (September, 1983).

***Feature News Service*Sponsored Magazines
International Features**

MARCH 26 MISC NOTES

1. LINE-UP: March 26: either ****Black Hebrews cash support dries up because of federal racketbusting of Black Hebrew scams back home; plus Israel-US strategy for imminent deportation despite their relinquishment of US citizenship... ***Jimmy Carter... ***Paul Kirk, Democratic Committee chairman first visit to Israel assesses Us-israeli relationship.**

April 2: annual Exodus hard news coverage in time for Passover use. Back by popular demand since many editors did not receive it sufficiently in time last year. This year we'll ship early. This piece will be an annual feature of the column. More later.

April 9: Jerusalem Bomb Squad from Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine. Tense color piece. I and a photographer accompanied bomb squad for two weeks. Black and white and color available. Full extralong version will be pre-shipped to fat guys who want it, such as Philly, Baltimore, Palm Beach etc. No surcharge for full version. Column sized to be distributed on time. TELL US NOW ASAP if you want photos. They will shipped in advance of the story. Please don't complain later that you couldn't get art on time.

April 16: either Black Hebes; American and Canadian (AACI) plans to reform Israel by reforming Israel's electoral system; or something else.

UPCOMING: Mu and Hu. Plans are being finalized for interviews with Pres Mubarek and King Hussein.

2. SECURITY ALERT ON PHONE CALLS. Due to the work done involving Farrakhan, Larouche, Black Hebrews and material of interest to the Meir Kahane crowd, we have experienced some harassment in recent weeks. Please DO NOT give any information about me over the phone, and instruct secretaries and clerical personnel as well-- especially lunchtime personnel and especially during the early April period after the Chgo Trib Sunday and Redbook pieces comes out. Recently, some people obtained my private number from the Chicago Sun-Times, and another from the Jerusalem Post. Beware of the following ruses: 1) an editor (especially from Georgia) with an urgent assignment; 2) a frantic Yiddish or Hebrew speaking person claiming to be a relative with news about an illness in the family-- beware Yiddishkeit here; 3) a creditor claiming I have a refund due, money owed, or lost credit card; 4) someone claiming they have information on Farrakhan to give me but only directly. Especially do not give my Minneapolis contact, any International Features reference, the names of other editors,

or my parents' number or address. Harassment calls from the states can be made at night in America and wake us up at 3 am in Israel. Follow the standard publication practice of not divulging any information. In the past editors have been good about this, but recent experience calls for a reminder. Thank you.

3. ETHICS VIOLATION. We are considering lodging an ethics complaint against Cox newspapers. Their Jerusalem correspondent legitimately became aware of exclusive Shamir interview material, namely the mini-Conference leak, but it was embargoed. A Cox request to break the embargo was not granted. Cox filed anyway and the story ran page one or prominently in Cox papers in Miami, Atlanta, and possibly Palm Beach and Dayton. We apologize to those papers, and are weighing the sitch with the Foreign Press Association here.

4. SYRACUSE, BALTIMORE, MESSENGER,. You are not sending comps to Minne. Neither is MIAMI, WINNEPEG, RARITAN, TULSA, or DALLAS. Judith, Gary, Yale, Jimmy, Howard-- can you guys please get with it.

5. SAME AS ABOVE PART TWO. In ramot, we are not getting but half the papers. We would appreciate Standard, Syracuse, Baltimore, New York, Phily, Seattle, Washington, Milwaukee, San Diego and of course the ever elusive and inscrutable Palm Beach. Do it today. In the meantime, we thank Atlanta, Boston, Albany, Orange, LA, Phoenix and others. It comes late but it's welcome. We are now receiving Jan and Feb editions.

6. SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS. To the requests for speaking engagements. We may be able to come in April or May. If you or your federation or any group you know wants me to speak on American J Press in Israel, Israeli Democracy, American Jewish-Israeli relations in wake of Pollard, peace process or anything else, please contact Minne asap. The itinerary is being finalized before pesach.

7. CAIRO CLIPS. Would appreciate if a half dozen of the larger papers sent certain clips to me first class: Cairo, ADL, Pollard, Chief Rebbes, Shamir.

8. ADAM TEITELBAUM'S PIX. If you used Adam's pix over the last month or so during the experiment, please notify Minne so he can at least figure out who you were. It would also be nice to pay him. Do so direct to address on back of print.

9. LIFE IN ISRAEL. Okay, I admit it. It's rough.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date April 23, 1986 CONFIDENTIAL

to Area Directors and Executive Assistants

from George E. Gruen, Director, Israel & Middle East Affairs

subject Alert on Black Hebrew Israelites

There have been several recent news developments affecting the Black Hebrews, the messianic sect which officially calls itself the "Original African Hebrew Israelite Nation of Jerusalem," both in Israel and in the United States.

You will recall that this sect of American Blacks, which claims to be the original Biblical Hebrews and has never been recognized as Jewish by any rabbinic group, originated in the Black ghettos of Chicago and other cities in the early 1960's. After a brief stay in Liberia, the first members of the group came to Israel in December 1969. Their request for Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return was denied since they were not regarded as Jewish and would not agree to conversion. They were permitted to stay for an initial three months while their status was examined. Since then they have been in a legal limbo and have been joined by other who have managed to enter Israel by various subterfuges. (For background details on the group and the difficulties of resolving the problem, see my enclosed report, The Position of the "Black Hebrews" in Israel: An Examination of the Complex Issues Involved, AJC, June 12, 1984. A brief review of the issues and more recent developments including the recommendation of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior that they be expelled, are contained in "Israel and the Black Hebrews," a Report from the Israel Office of the American Jewish Committee, issued on November 7, 1985.)

I. Israel Moves to Expel Black Hebrews

According to Yediot Aharonot (April 18, 1986) on April 17, a task force of nearly 200 Israeli police arrested a group of 46 Black Hebrews -- men, women and children -- who were found living and working illegally at a citrus packing plant in Rehovot. They were taken to various detention centers and kept there in preparation for their deportation back to the United States. The paper reports that they had come from the main center of the group in Dimona some six months previously. The leader of the sect, Ben-Ami Carter, contacted a lawyer to prepare an appeal to the High Court of Justice to obtain a court order to stop the expulsion proceedings. Carter was quoted as saying that while he did not know what the court's decision would be, "this time we will react sharply and will fight to the end."

cc: Steering Committee, Commission on International Relations

Ha'Aretz, (April 18, 1986) gives the number of those arrested as 47, and says that they have been living illegally in Israel for about six months. The paper adds that the group, which was arrested at 1 AM, offered no resistance. Ha'Aretz notes that the police operation was supervised by a team from the Ministry of the Interior, which had requested the help of the police in its stringent efforts to crack down on foreign nationals who were staying in Israel illegally, "at a time when the number of unemployed is constantly increasing."

The Israeli Consulate in New York has confirmed the crackdown, noting that in recent months the Ministry of the Interior has expelled illegal workers who had come from the Philippines, Thailand, Yugoslavia and India. Yitzhak Agazi, spokesman of the Ministry of the Interior, was quoted by Yediot Aharonot as saying that the Black Hebrews have a "clear anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli ideology, and many of them are being sought by the authorities in the United States and in Israel for various crimes." He added that the proper legal procedures would be followed, but that he expected the process to end with their departure from Israel.

So far none of this information has appeared in the American press, but if the expulsion orders are carried out, we can expect a major outcry by the Black Hebrews and efforts to enlist allies within the general Black community. This will no doubt exacerbate Black-Jewish relations.

II. Indictment of Black Hebrews in U.S. on Criminal Charges

The enclosed article from the Washington Post of March 12, 1986 gives details of the major criminal charges, including credit card fraud and use of bogus checks and stolen airlines tickets, being leveled by the U.S. Government against nine leaders of the Black Hebrews in the United States. Included is Prince Asiel Ben Israel (a.k.a. Warren Brown), who has been acting as the "foreign minister" of the Black Hebrews and with whom we and various other Jewish and Black civil rights leaders have met with over the years, at his request, in our unsuccessful efforts to bring about a lawful and equitable solution to the Black Hebrew problem in Israel.

III. Arraignment of Black Hebrews in Child Abuse Cases

I am enclosing three clippings reporting on the arraignment of members of a Black Hebrew Israelite group in Queens, New York, on charges of child abuse. It is not clear how closely this group is related to the group in Israel.

IV. Mount Vernon Black Hebrew Tourists Expelled from Israel

Finally, enclosed are several clippings relating to the unfortunate experience of a group of 26 Black Hebrews from Mt. Vernon, who were denied entry to Israel on March 7 and were deported on the first available flight. This caused quite a stir in the New York media,

especially because of some insensitive remarks attributed to Mr. Agazi. We contacted our Israel Office and obtained a statement of clarification from Mr. Agazi, the Spokesman of the Ministry of Interior. A copy is enclosed for your information.

I should add confidentially that the feeling of Jewish representatives from Westchester, with whom Bernice Newman and I met at the Israeli Consulate, is that this is a middle class group, who appear to have been legitimate tourists and did not intend to join the other members of the sect living illegally in Dimona, Arad and Mitzpe Ramon. However, in view of what has been going on, the Israeli authorities were naturally suspicious and within their legal rights to deport them. The idea is being explored to have a few members of this group invited to visit Israel again together with prominent citizens of Mt. Vernon, possibly including the mayor, who happens to be Black. This would help make it clear that Israel has nothing against Blacks, indeed it has welcomed thousands of Black Jews from Ethiopia, but that it must safeguard itself against those, such as the Black Hebrew Israelities, who would enter and live in the country without fully obeying the laws.

* * *

P.S. Also included is a copy of a letter from Geneva Holley, one of the defectors of the group in Dimona, in which she makes charges about abusive treatment of others in the group by the leadership.