

{1} Josef Rabinowitz – The Herzl of Jewish Christianity

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Introduction

The story of Josef Rabinowitz is a fascinating one: In 1882 a Russian Jew arrives in Palestine to explore the possibilities of Jewish settlement. His Zionist expectations are frustrated. He comes to believe in Jesus on the Mount of Olives, returns to his native town of Kischinev in Bessarabia (southwestern Russia near the Romanian border) and establishes a Jewish Christian congregation, Bnei Israel Bnei Brit Hadasha, (Israelites of the New Covenant) continuing as its leader. He holds services almost every Sabbath and on the Christian and Jewish holidays. In 1899, at the age of 62, he dies and is buried in the congregational graveyard. In accordance with his own wish, his tombstone bears this inscription: "An Israelite, who believed in Jehovah and in His Anointed, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Josef Ben David Rabinowitz."

It is worth noticing that Jesus is referred to as *King of the Jews*. After Rabinowitz's return to Russia from Palestine he became known for the expression *Yeshua Achinu-Jesus* our brother.

Earlier Works

References to Rabinowitz can be found in any work dealing with the recent history of Jewish Christianity. The story of his conversion has always been good copy in popular books about Jewish-Christian characters, even in his own lifetime. Both Hugh J. Schonfield, in *The History of Jewish Christianity*, and Jacob Jocz, in *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, can be criticized for not having been in close encounter with primary sources.

In works on Rabinowitz the primary sources have rarely been consulted. Few questions were asked and, consequently, few answers are provided which might have been of help to Christian Jews today. I would like to draw attention to some views which were relevant to Rabinowitz and may be

{2} relevant to Messianic Jews today. Rabinowitz's enthusiasm did not exclude theological reflection; the two formed a synthesis-at least at the commencement of his public ministry. If Baruch Maoz is right when he claims that among Messianic Jews in Israel today there is a mystical, anti-intellectual and irrational belief in Jesus due to lack of serious study of the Scriptures, then I am convinced that a study of Rabinowitz, his

struggles and his theology, might be beneficial. It goes without saying that we cannot accept everything Rabinowitz stood for. He, as well as anybody else, was influenced by his time and background, including the political circumstances which then prevailed.

Not only may contemporary Christian Jews benefit from a study of Rabinowitz. Gentiles who are interested in the salvation of Israel and in Israel missions will, through their confrontation with Rabinowitz, be asked questions which are still relevant.

Background and Conversion

Josef Rabinowitz was born in 1837. He was brought up under Chassidic influence but as a teenager was influenced by Western cultural currents. In his mid-fifties he received a Hebrew New Testament from Yechiel Zebi Herschensohn (later known as Lichtenstein), his brother-in-law. During the 1870's onwards he made his own living as a legal adviser, and wrote articles for Jewish magazines in Russia, (among them the acknowledged *Hamelitz*). As a Haskala Jew, he advocated the establishment of agricultural settlements in Palestine. When these plans failed, he advocated emigration to Palestine during the pogroms in 1881-2. He was sent to Palestine as a delegate in the early summer of 1882, where he met representatives of Zionism who greatly disappointed him. At the Western Wall he saw that Jews could not pray without being met with insults from Moslems. With this in mind, he could not imagine that settlement in Palestine could be the answer to "the Jewish question" for Russian Jews.

On the Mount of Olives he remembered a verse from the New Testament which he had read fifteen years before: "For if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). Back at his hotel, he read the New Testament he had brought along, and was struck by the words in John 15:5: "Apart from me you can do nothing." The description of his conversion continues: "In that way it came to pass by an act of God Almighty that he became enlightened by the light of the Gospel. *Yeshua Achinu* (Jesus our Brother) was from now on his watchword, with which he returned to Russia." Rabinowitz's conversion was unexpected to all concerned. But this is not to say that there were no steps leading to it. Professor Delitzsch was annoyed because Rabinowitz, in his 1887 autobiography, did not enter into details about "the emergence and breakthrough of his Christian conviction." Rabinowitz was rather sparing of words when dealing with this subject. It would also be interesting to know more of his relation to the {3} Christian faith before 1882. There is certain evidence of his having read in a Hebrew New Testament. My enquiries lead me to surmise that, some time during the 1850's, he had an existential encounter-maybe even a confrontation-with Christianity through his friendship with Herschensohn. It is odd that his autobiography does not mention that he was given a New Testament by Herschensohn (who had received it from the Lutheran pastor in Kischinev). Herschensohn was baptized and later became a missionary, still later a teacher at Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig. Rabinowitz is silent about all this. In his letters to Delitzsch in Leipzig, where Herschensohn was at the time, I have not come

across one single greeting to his brother-in-law. Apparently, when Lichtenstein became a Christian, Rabinowitz harassed and sought to harm him in every way.

It may be that Rabinowitz minimizes these relations to Herschensohn and others because, after 1882, they were of less importance to him. Or perhaps his motive was to avoid the possibility that a missionary society would claim him as its convert. In England A. Saphir wrote in *The Christian*: "No society has the slightest reason to claim him as their convert. His conversion was a sovereign act by the Holy Spirit."

This statement was clearly intended for The British Society and its secretary, J. Dunlop, who did not miss any opportunity to announce that, if Rabinowitz had not met a representative from the society in Odessa-'Josef Rabinowitz might not have been converted." The London Society has another version: one of their missionaries in Warsaw sent Rabinowitz a New Testament through which he received his first positive impression of Christianity.

Many details could be added, demonstrating the rivalry between various missionary societies wanting to take the credit for Rabinowitz's conversion. John Wilkinson, who founded The Mildmay Mission, became one of Rabinowitz's most loyal supporters, and during a visit by Rabinowitz in England and Scotland in 1887, the London Council for Rabinowitz was formed. It is greatly to Wilkinson's credit that he did not try to monopolize Rabinowitz, but introduced him to as many circles as possible. In that way many organizations became involved with the London Council for Rabinowitz.

Details concerning Rabinowitz's view of Christianity before 1882, and leading up to his conversion, are obscure. It is my opinion that his conversion was unexpected, but that it had nevertheless been prepared for in various ways. He was later to become an eager advocate for distribution of Bibles. That may indicate that he understood that even sporadic reading of the

{4} New Testament can have positive long-term effects. In 1883 he gave a New Testament to his nephew with the words: "Read it, and do not be afraid of the name of Jesus." The nephew was baptized in 1885.

The following statement made in London, in 1887, shows the importance he attached to reading the New Testament:

When a Jew asks me what to do and what way to go, I tell him to read the New Testament. And when he then says, "Now I've done that," I tell him the same thing as a doctor will say to a patient who has recovered by taking the medicine that was prescribed for him, "Take another bottle, and another, and yet another." I say the same thing to the sin-sick Jew, "Read the New Testament again and again. Eventually, it will have the desired effect."

Following Rabinowitz's Return From Palestine

Rabinowitz returned to Kischinev on 5 July 1882. On 8 July he sent an article to *Hamelitz*, in which he denied that he had been a delegate on behalf of the Jewish community in Kischinev. He had traveled out as a private individual in accordance with the wish of a few brethren and close relatives.

In this article-apparently his last in *Hamelitz*-he made no mention of the fact that he had come to believe in Jesus. On January 1884 Rabinowitz's name appeared in an article on the front page of *Hamelitz*. The editor printed a reader's letter in which Rabinowitz is accused of having connections with Lutheran missionaries. Together with the Lutheran pastor, Rabinowitz is described in the letter as laying plans to lure Jewish souls into Luther's net-a terminology reminiscent of that used in our time against Christian Jews by anti-mission organisations. Jews in Kischinev are said to meet Rabinowitz with silent contempt. The editor outlined the history of Rabinowitz's life, acknowledged him to be an important Haskala Jew and admits that, at first, he believed the rumors about Rabinowitz were unfounded. "How could we believe that such a man should have changed convictions so late in life?" he asks. Jewish sources later represented Rabinowitz as uneducated and mentally disturbed.

What happened between 5 July 1882 and January 1884? Very briefly the following: Rabinowitz carried on his practice of law. He became immersed in studies of the Old and New Testaments. He communicated with close friends and began to hint of his new convictions to those he advised; consequently fewer Jews sought his advice. In short, Rabinowitz did not straight away blurt out that he had come to believe in Jesus or that he wanted to establish a Jewish-Christian congregation.

In the autumn of 1883 Rabinowitz appeared publicly and approached the Lutheran pastor in Kischinev, Rudolf Faltin. Faltin was of a highly estimated Christian character and was known in Western Europe for his {5} work among Jews, even though he was first and foremost a pastor for the German-speaking immigrants and soldiers. A meeting was set up in a neutral place-a condition laid down by Rabinowitz and communicated by a third party. Rabinowitz did not want to arouse suspicion that his purpose was to receive Christian instruction and that he was considering baptism. Rabinowitz presented his plan, that "Israel" should come together and form a Christian congregation where they could retain their national customs. "How that was to be, they were not able to determine," Faltin says, but they were united in the faith.

During this meeting Rabinowitz handed thirteen theses to Faltin, who immediately sent them on to Delitzsch. The thirteen theses outline the beneficial effects, social as well as political, which a reception of "our brother Jesus" would have upon Russian Jews. If these theses are an adequate expression of Rabinowitz's faith at the time, something important is missing. At Christmas 1883 Rabinowitz received a letter from the Jewish Christian Georg Friedmann, who urged him to recognise that Jesus must be seen as the Son of God and as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. "Beloved

brethren," he wrote, "you are not far from the way of truth and peace, but you have not yet set foot on it."

By 1884 Rabinowitz was on solid ground. The thirteen Theses constitute an interesting contribution to an understanding of Rabinowitz's theological development. Later there were those who accorded the theses equal status with other documents from Rabinowitz's hand. But such equality gives a distorted picture of what Rabinowitz stood for as leader of the Israelites of the New Covenant. In 1885 he had this to say about his own development: "First I honored Jesus as a great human being with a compassionate heart, later as one who was concerned about my people, and finally as one who took away my sins."

Unfortunately, popular works on Rabinowitz do not show evidence of the process of such development.

The Messianic Movement Takes Form

In March 1884 three representatives from the British Society arrived in Kischinev. Quite independently, Wilhelm Faber also arrived in town. A conference was held with Rabinowitz, at which he presented various articles of faith. Through Faber, contact was established with Professor Delitzsch, which later proved important, as Delitzsch made Rabinowitz known by publishing his writing. As early as February 1885, *The Jewish Herald* announced that the movement in Bessarabia "has received attention {6} from the press all over the world...In front of us are English, German, French, Italian and American magazines - secular and religious - Jewish and Christian, for or against, but all more or less interested in the movement..." If the Scandinavian countries had been within their scope, they would have been able to add: Norwegian, Swedish and Danish magazines!

Rabinowitz had already held his first assembly on Christmas Eve 1884, i.e. on 5 January 1885 according to the Russian orthodox calendar. The Russian authorities gave him permission to deliver sermons and hold assemblies, but he was not permitted to establish a Christian congregation because he was not authorized to administer the sacraments. The Russian authorities considered his assemblies to be a synagogue.

At the first gatherings there was much commotion. A vast crowd was attracted and the police had to intervene and protect Rabinowitz. Early in 1885 it was rumored in the Western press that he had been murdered, but the report was soon found to be false.

Further Developments

Following is a brief outline of the development of Rabinowitz's work.

1. The size of the congregation

After initial curiosity had dissipated, the inrush found its level. Up to 1890 a congregation of 100-150 was not unusual, sometimes there were more. In 1890

Rabinowitz acquired a new building, the so-called Somerville Memorial Hall, predominantly financed with Scottish funds passed on by the London Council for Rabinowitz. From 1891 to 1899 average attendance was about fifty, but there were services with a considerably larger congregation.

Echoes of the work were heard in the far corners of Russia and many other places. Many became acquainted with Rabinowitz through his writings. A. Saphir was right when, in 1885, he said that the importance of the Messianic movement in Kischinev could not be measured by its numerical strength but by its inner value.

2. Activities

Rabinowitz was first and foremost a preacher. Even his critics praised him for his unusual gifts as a preacher. F. Heman of Basel wrote: "He is a preacher sent by God; they say that since the time of the apostle Paul no one has been able to preach in such a powerful way to the Jewish people as Rabinowitz."

As a rule, he did not go out to people, as did many missionaries to the Jews at that time. He invited them to his services. Through printed sermons, booklets and pamphlets he was studied in wide circles. He received many letters from people who wanted his advice.

{7} Perhaps the declining numbers of his audience in Kischinev were behind his plans to build a train for evangelization, allowing him to take the gospel to distant parts of Russia. The train was to bear the same inscription as Somerville Memorial Hall, the words from Acts 2:36: "All the people of Israel, then, are to know for sure that it is this Jesus, whom you nailed to the cross, that God has made Lord and Messiah!"

Before this project could be carried out, he had to complete another. In collaboration with others, he had been working on a revision of the New Testament in Yiddish, finally published in 1901. His death in 1899 put an end to his plans for the evangelization train.

3. Economy

From 1885 onwards, Rabinowitz received financial support from various Israel missions in Western Europe. From 1887, most of the money passed through the London Council for Rabinowitz. Much of the money came from Scotland. From Jewish quarters it was argued vigorously that he had sold himself. The original plan was that after a few years, his congregation would be self supporting. That never happened. It is impossible to say anything certain about Rabinowitz's private use of money, but he' was no ascetic.

We also know that he received sufficient money from abroad so that he was able to devote himself completely to the work. Rabinowitz never regretted his dependence on foreign funds, as some maintain. But the money that passed through the London Council for Rabinowitz-his main source of income-was given with the distinct understanding that no one would interfere with Rabinowitz's affairs in Russia.

4. Money and mission reports

Rabinowitz did not write many reports and yet enjoyed much publicity. Nothing in the sources indicates that he objected to that. On the contrary, he sought it for the sake of his work.

Lhotzky, a German who was in Kischinev for a few years from 1885 and who kept in touch with Rabinowitz, describes those who visited Rabinowitz and then hastened home to write a report: "By doing so they spoiled all that might have grown well if left alone. Oh, those wretched mission reports...." And he continues, "Mission needs reports and money. He who does not write reports cannot raise funds; he who does not raise funds cannot missionize. Mission can be carried on without spirit, but not without money," is Lhotzky's sarcastic conclusion.

There is an element of sober provocation in these words, and we should allow ourselves to be provoked by them. Lhotzky wanted to aim a blow at certain English societies, thinking that by so doing he would be defending {8} Rabinowitz. But this is a mistake. Rabinowitz sought publicity concerning his person and work.

In 1887-8 Faltin and Rabinowitz broke with each other. Faltin accused Rabinowitz of having started a dangerous practice in "teaching and living." Faltin's position was a weak one. Rabinowitz continued to receive massive support from Delitzsch, Faber and Dalman, among others. At the beginning, cooperation between Faltin and Rabinowitz was very promising. Faltin accused Rabinowitz of being an Ebionite. If Rabinowitz had continued as a preacher and had become a member of the Lutheran church, it is not likely that Faltin would have attacked him.

Outline of Rabinowitz's Theology

The time has come for a brief outline of Rabinowitz's theology and his struggle for a Jewish-Christian congregation.

1. Baptism

Rabinowitz was baptized in Berlin in March 1885. This came as a shock for Faltin in Kischinev. If Rabinowitz had been baptized by Faltin, he would have become a Lutheran, and according to existing Russian legislation he would no longer be considered a Jew. But Rabinowitz wanted to be a Jew, he wanted to retain his Jewish identity.

Rabinowitz was not forced into baptism. He had already discussed the question thoroughly with Faber in Kischinev. In the course of those conversations, Rabinowitz gradually concluded that the right form of baptism is infant baptism and that baptism is a sacrament, not just an act of confession. Later he criticized another famous Jewish believer, Isaac Lichenstein in Hungary, for his avoidance of baptism. They met in 1891 in Budapest, where the last member of Rabinowitz' family, his wife, was baptized. After her baptism, Rabinowitz wired back to their children: "Mama gerettet" (Mom saved).

Rabinowitz wrote in a letter: "If Rabbi Lichtenstein really loves his people Israel - let him be baptized."

After discussions in Leipzig with Delitzsch and John Wilkinson among others, arrangements were made for Rabinowitz to be baptized in Berlin - and under quite extraordinary circumstances: He was baptized in the Bohemian-Lutheran church by the Congregationalist (Methodist) Pastor and Professor C. M. Mead from Andover, Massachusetts, in the presence of a few invited people, and baptized on the strength of a creed written by himself in Hebrew, after having testified to being in complete agreement with the Apostles' Creed. He wanted his own Creed, seven points, for his own congregation.

Rabinowitz was thus baptized into the universal church of Christ, without becoming a member of any one denomination, and without losing his Jewish {9} identity. Delitzsch recognized this and defended Rabinowitz when he was later attacked.

Rabinowitz was never permitted to baptize or administer the sacraments. The authorities would only allow him to function as a preacher. So, when the term *Rabinowitz's congregation* is used, it should always be borne in mind that he was never given permission to establish a church proper, because he was never allowed to administer the sacraments. No wonder that Rabinowitz's movement collapsed after his death. In 1887 it looked as if this could be helped. Some members of his congregation were baptized in Rohrbach by a Hungarian Christian Jew called Venetianer. But the authorities put a stop to that, possibly due to efforts on the part of Faltin or others from the Lutheran church in Kischinev.

2. Rabinowitz's Creed and the Twenty-Four Articles of Faith

In March 1884, one year before his baptism, Rabinowitz was on solid theological ground. This becomes clear from the documents he wrote at that time. I shall concentrate on other documents, written between March 1884 and March 1885, because they express Rabinowitz's ongoing views. The two documents that express Rabinowitz's persistent convictions did not enjoy as much publicity as the first documents. His Creed and his twenty-four Articles of Faith appear in the *Tfila*, the book of prayers, which was reissued in 1892.

The Creed was intended to be a counterpart to the Apostles' Creed, and resembles stylistically Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith by having the same introductory formula, "I fully believe." As to the content, the declaration has points in common with Maimonides' Thirteen articles, particularly when it comes to describe the unity of God. But Rabinowitz emphasizes that this one God created all things "by His Word and His Holy Spirit." This was his indication of belief in the Trinity, although he did not want to use the term. Altogether, it is Rabinowitz characteristically endeavoring to use biblical terms, avoiding terms taken from the dogmatic of the gentile-Christian church.

The Creed is written in Jewish style. But it is orthodox. It does not mention any of the distinctive characteristics of his congregation, such as the observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, Passover etc. The conception of Jesus by a virgin is mentioned, but again, it is the substance, not the term, that we find:

I fully believe that our Father who is in Heaven, according to His promise to our fathers, to our prophets and to our King David son of Jesse, has raised a Redeemer for Israel, Jesus; who was born of the Virgin Mary in the town of Bethlehem in Judea; who suffered, was crucified, died and was buried for our salvation. He rose from the dead and lives, and lo, he is sitting at the right hand of the Father, who is in heaven, {10} and from there he shall truly come to judge the earth, the living and the dead. He is King of the house of Jacob forever and there is no end to His kingdom.

One of the tablets that formed the altarpiece in his meeting-house is inscribed with this article. It appears in a photograph that has been preserved. The Creed also mentions baptism and the church:

I fully believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

- The Twenty-Four Doctrines

Shortly after, or perhaps at the same time as he worded this Creed, he also formulated twenty-four doctrines. The Twenty-Four Doctrines afford us a glimpse of Rabinowitz as a tactician: In 1886 a Dane wrote concerning the doctrines, that Rabinowitz "seems to have the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church in view." In fact, not only did he have them in view, he had them in Hebrew!

In 1837, the Book of Common Prayer was translated into Hebrew. In 1841 a fully vocalized edition appeared. It is possible to demonstrate that as to construction, style and content Rabinowitz followed the Book of Common Prayer. His work is not a slavish imitation; there are omissions and particular accentuations. For example, he omits all that in his opinion is only relevant to a gentile Christian context, such as dissociation from certain heretics mentioned by name. While the Anglican Church was using the Hebrew version in Jerusalem, Rabinowitz could hardly be blamed for using analogous doctrines in Kischinev!

There is an element of Jewish coloring to the material. When trying to describe the person of Jesus, Rabinowitz avoids using the ecclesiastical Greek definitions such as "being" and "nature." Article 1 in the Book of Common Prayer refers to Jesus as the Word of the Father, born of the Father in eternity. It is notable that in the article about free will, Rabinowitz refers to Jesus as, and I quote, "The Word of our heavenly Father, born of the Father in eternity." The first four articles are:

Article 1: On the unity of God

Article 2: On Jesus, the Redeemer of Israel

Article 3: On the sin of Israel and her rebellion against Messiah. This article has no counterpart in the Book of Common Prayer, but the prominence of this article is, of course, due to the fact that these are the doctrines of the Israelites of the New Covenant. Jesus is called the Lord and it is implied that his work is for all nations.

*Article 4: On justification: the article has a more prominent position than in the Book of Common Prayer, where it appears as article 11. It states clearly that man is justified by faith alone, without any works of **{11}** the law. Galatians 3:28 is quoted, which makes it clear that at this point there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. They are one in Jesus Messiah. The article continues: "By faith in the Messiah we observe the law (The Torah), and it is a great relief to the soul and full of comfort." Rabinowitz has lifted the last sentence from the Book of Common Prayer (article 11 on justification), but in the Book of Common Prayer reference is not to observance of the law but to justification by faith.*

In Article 7, Rabinowitz vigorously dissociated himself from the Mishna, Talmud and Shulchan Aruch. It goes without saying that this article has no counterpart in the Book of Common Prayer. No doctrine can be based on these writings. The Mishna and Talmud are but an eternal monument of the greatness of that spirit of sleep that God let fall on "us." Shulchan Aruch is looked upon as a hindrance and a snare which has prevented "our eyes from seeing the ways of the living and true faith." Delitzsch thought that Rabinowitz was too severe in his criticism of the Jewish traditional literature.

Through the Creed and the twenty-four doctrines Rabinowitz expressed his orthodoxy. He was not an Ebionite, as maintained by Faltin and others.

3. Rabinowitz's Adherence to Jewish Customs

What about the law, observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, insistence on the Jewish Passover—all of which Rabinowitz was determined not to forgo. I have already emphasized Delitzsch's support of Rabinowitz. Delitzsch was so great a man that he did not proclaim Rabinowitz a heretic on account of the latter's adherence to Jewish practices, although Delitzsch voiced his disapproval of it. Delitzsch rejoiced in Rabinowitz's work. He knew that Rabinowitz's doctrine of justification was in agreement with the Bible and the Reformation fathers, and that was the crucial point for him. In this connection, it must also be mentioned that, at an early stage, Rabinowitz made Romans 10:4 one of his main themes: "Messiah is the end of the law." This is evident in his sermons; it further is testified to by a man who came to Rabinowitz's services in Kischinev in order to accumulate arguments against him but who eventually became a believer; and it is evidenced by the Torah scroll which lay in Rabinowitz's house of prayer until he acquired his new building. The scroll bore the inscription in Hebrew: "Messiah is the end of the law."

And yet Rabinowitz wanted to observe the Sabbath, circumcision, Jewish feasts, etc. In short: he wanted to retain his Jewish identity. He wanted this freedom for himself, but

did not insist that those Jews who had come to believe and who acted differently were wrong. Yet he could take no other course.

{12} In March 1884 a conference was held in Kischinev. It was the first meeting between representatives of the British Society and Faber, who was Delitzsch's representative. Some of those present voiced their misgivings about Rabinowitz. He seemed to be smuggling the law in through the back door.

Rabinowitz had indicated that he and others similarly disposed wanted to observe Jewish customs inherited from the fathers, only in so far as these did not clash with the spirit of Christianity. From a religious point of view, he and his adherents believed that the law had been fulfilled by the Messiah. But from a "patriotic" point of view, they considered themselves under obligation to observe the law, in so far as nationality and circumstances made it possible.

This gave rise to a debate about circumcision and the Sabbath. Gentile Christians were concerned that Rabinowitz might want to observe these commandments for religious reasons. They therefore asked Rabinowitz if a Christian Jew who does not circumcise his child sins. Rabinowitz answered, "He does not commit a sin, but he alienates himself from his own Jewish people." He gave a similar answer to the question concerning Christian Jews who do not observe the Sabbath.

For Rabinowitz, circumcision was a sacred sign given to Abraham and the Jewish people. There is an Abrahamic covenant, which the Mosaic law does not nullify. Rabinowitz was convinced that it was wrong for gentiles to become circumcised, and he quoted Galatians 5:20 to prove it.

The Sabbath had been given to Israel as an eternal commandment. It rests with the Israelites of the New Covenant to keep this commandment. But they are totally free concerning laws conditional on the possession of the land of Israel, the temple service, the installment of the authorities and such like, all no longer pertinent.

Rabinowitz had no scruples about turning on the samovar or lighting a cigar on Sabbath—much to the surprise of Venetianer who visited him in Kischinev.

Rabinowitz also wrote a Passover Haggada, traditional in form as concerns the four cups, which he called: Abraham's cup, Moses' cup, David's cup, and the cup of salvation-Jesus Messiah's cup. Haggada had been christianized.

{13} 4. Rabinowitz's Services

A brief sketch will have to suffice. Rabinowitz held services on the Sabbath and on Jewish and Christian holidays. On his return to Kischinev from Berlin, where he had been baptized, he wrote that on the Sabbath there was a large and attentive audience in the Hall. The following day was Easter Sunday and Rabinowitz held another service. This was the first time, Rabinowitz writes, that the mighty words, "Christ is risen," were heard in a Jewish house of prayer. The same words could be heard in Kischinev in 1903,

a few years after Rabinowitz's death, on the lips of "Christians" who proceeded to plunder, loot and kill Jews-a ghastly pogrom which made the town of Kischinev known abroad for many years to come.

The services had a liturgical structure, with a definite Jewish stamp. There was no singing as there is none in the synagogue. At first he borrowed a harmonium from the Lutheran church, but it was only used at the very first services-it was not a particularly "Jewish" element.

Rabinowitz was a long-winded speaker. His first services lasted for several hours. Faber thought in 1885 that Rabinowitz spoke "uncommonly fast," and he claims that, as a rule, his sermons would last two hours. The Scottish church leader Somerville also remarked after his visit to Kischinev that Rabinowitz spoke very fast when he preached in Yiddish, and in his diary he wrote that the sermon lasted for "one hour except four minutes!"

In 1888 he said, "Two things occupy my mind: one is the Lord Jesus Christ, the other is Israel."

In London, in 1889, he said,

My situation is to be compared with a man who goes to sea in a ship and suffers shipwreck with all on board. All the shipwrecked try to find solid ground so that they can be saved. If one, while struggling for dear life, finds a rock, he who has his feet on firm ground will try to shout to the others who are still struggling in the water. And if someone is so far away that he cannot hear his voice, the man on the rock will lift up something--a stick, a flag-in order to catch their attention and help them to reach the rock.

This is my very situation. Russia is the ocean, the Jews there are like shipwrecked people, and since, by the grace of God, my feet are on the rock-which is Jesus-I am trying to act like the man I just told you about: I am calling out and signaling to the shipwrecked to make for the rock.

Earlier, in 1884 Rabinowitz made the following statement, headed "Joseph's Misfortune." Let us heed it: {14} I have always felt very strongly about my people's misfortune. I have even tried various ways of remedying it, but everything has been in vain.

When a doctor comes to see a patient, he has to question the patient thoroughly before he can prescribe a remedy for the illness. The doctor feels his pulse, squeezes here and there all the time asking, "Does this hurt?" "Are there any pains here?" But only when the doctor touches the sore spot, does the patient give a distinct answer. The pain squeezes the words out of him: "Don't press so hard, it hurts!"

That is what I experienced when I concerned myself with the illnesses of my people. In vain did I press in various places. As I did not touch the sore spot, there was hardly an answer.

If I said, "Talmud and the whole body of rabbinical commentaries are not, as it is asserted, from Sinai, but it is the work of man, full of sense and nonsense"-then such words made little impression on my people.

If I said, "Nor does the Tanach (The Old Testament) contain anything but words of men, unproved stories and unbelievable miracles,"-that did not prevent me from remaining the esteemed Rabinowitz; nor did it distress my people.

They remained calm when I put Moses on equal footing with magicians of our time; it did not affect them that I called this Moses a fraud. I could even deny God, and my people would not let out a cry.

But when I returned from the Holy Land with the glad tidings: Jesus is our Brother, then I touched the sore spot. A scream of pain was heard and reverberated from all quarters: "Don't squeeze, don't touch, it hurts!"

Well, it does hurt. But I want you, my people, to know that this is exactly your illness; you do not need anything but your Brother Jesus. Your illness is exactly that you do not have Him. Accept Him, and you will receive healing for all your illnesses.