



# First “Organized” Bible-work in 19th Century Jerusalem

Part IX: Joseph Wolff and Lady Georgiana  
in Jerusalem in 1829

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**In the eighth article in this series, it was demonstrated that even though, from the summer of 1824 through the spring of 1827, Protestant Bible-men now and then came to stay in Jerusalem, not very much was done in the way of distribution of Scriptures. The cause was not so much the bans and bulls that were issued against their work, as the very troubled political situation. They nonetheless continued the lease of the Bible Society Room at Mar Michael in Jerusalem, probably hoping for better times.**

**In this article, we will follow Joseph Wolff during his third and last visit to Jerusalem in 1829. He was banned, not just by the Jews and the Roman Catholics, but also by the Greek Orthodox, who up until that time had supported the Bible work eagerly. The reason for this will now be investigated.**

At the beginning of January 1829, Joseph Wolff and Lady Georgiana arrive in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> They had been married back in England in February 1827. On their arrival in Beirut in May 1828, the city is without Protestant missionaries. Due to circumstances caused by the Greek Liberation War, the latter have taken refuge in Malta. With ill-concealed criticism of the evacuation of the missionaries, Wolff writes: “Here at Beyroust, we live as quietly and as safely as at London.”<sup>2</sup> Through various channels the couple tries to get a *firman*, a travel permit, so they can proceed to Jerusalem. When this

1 About Wolff’s two earlier visits in 1822 and 1823, see *Mishkan* 49 (2006): 42–58; and 54 (2008): 64–79. The sources for the visit in 1829 are partly Wolff’s contemporary journals and letters sent to the London Jews Society (LJS), which are published consecutively (in extracts) in the *Jewish Expositor* and the *Monthly Intelligence*; and partly contributions in the form of letters which Wolff in 1839 sent to Sir Thomas Baring, Bart and which were printed in the book *Journal of the Rev. Joseph Wolff . . . Containing an Account of His Missionary Labours From the Years 1827 to 1831; and From the Years 1835 to 1838* (London: James Burns, 1839). As a whole, this book is a curious hodgepodge from a historical and literary point of view, with quite a few lapses, e.g. concerning dates (year, month, day of the month); much of the material is of an anecdotal character and is apt to make the modern reader smile. But if it is read critically together with the original correspondence from 1829, the material from 1839 does fill in some historical gaps.

2 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 33.

fails, they go to Cyprus, and later to Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Here they acquire a passport to Yemen. On January 7, 1829, they nevertheless arrive in Jerusalem.

The day after his arrival in Jerusalem, Wolff, who in November 1826 had been employed as a missionary for the London Jews Society (LJS),<sup>4</sup> writes this to the committee in London:

You will be surprised to find my letter dated from the city of Jerusalem in these troublous times.

After we had taken at Cairo our passports for Yemen, Lady Georgiana said, "Let us go to Jerusalem;" and to Jerusalem we went, and at Jerusalem we are, residing in the convent of Mar Michael, situated upon Mount Calvary; and at Jerusalem we hope to stay."<sup>5</sup>

The couple had left Cairo on December 16, 1828, with as many as seventeen hired camels.<sup>6</sup> Surely some of these must have been loaded with Scriptures; during the visit in 1829 there is no indication that Wolff is short of Scriptures for distribution. Other camels were loaded with gifts that the couple hand out generously, not least to persons in authority; I wonder if one camel carried the pianoforte which Lady Georgiana later on played in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> Even more important, they arrive at Jerusalem with high eschatological expectations. Wolff is convinced that the second coming of Christ will take place in Jerusalem in the year 1847, an opinion he does not keep to himself but, in his own words, had maintained strongly in Jerusalem in 1829. He not only sees himself as "Missionary to the Jews in Palestine and Persia"; he is also "Apostle to the Jews."<sup>8</sup>

It is *the apostle* Joseph Wolff who makes his entry to Jerusalem in 1829 – together with his Lady. How did it go?

## Wolff and the Muslim Authorities

It certainly is an audacious mission Wolff and Lady Georgiana are on: as English citizens, they have come to Jerusalem without a *firman*. The na-

3 Ibid., 33; 108–12; 278–80.

4 It would require a separate article to describe the tense relationship between LJS and Wolff, right from the beginning of his employment and to the break between them in 1831. In LJS's official organs this tension finds expression in, among others, *Jewish Expositor* (1830): 166; *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 111; *Monthly Intelligence* (1831): 47; and *Monthly Intelligence* (1831): 160, where it is said: "The Rev. J. Wolff is not the missionary of our Society." In this rupture – this is the way LJS sees it and the way it is reflected in LJS's minutes (Bodleian Library, Dep. CMJ, for the period 1829–31) – are included Wolff's opaque money transactions, his articles (cf. note 8 below), which were published without LJS's sanction, and his refusal to come to London to explain himself.

5 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 317.

6 Ibid., 317.

7 Wolff, 254.

8 The former term is from a letter from Jerusalem dated April 20, 1829, published in the *Morning Herald*, September 5, 1829; the latter appears in connection with a prophecy dated Limasol, Cyprus, December 21, 1829, and published in the same newspaper on April 5, 1830. Both articles are pasted in to the LJS's minutes from a meeting on June 19, 1830 (Bodleian Library, Dep. CMJ, c.13 #952).



val Battle of Navarino in the autumn of 1827, when the combined British, French, and Russian fleets sank Turkish and Egyptian battleships, has not been forgotten. In 1829, Turkey is at war with Russia. Wolff writes: "We are now at Jerusalem, where at present the English name is as much hated by the Turks as that of the Russians."<sup>9</sup> Against that background it is surprising that Wolff has no difficulty getting residence permits in Jerusalem.

Wolff is not well on his arrival – the first night he has to call for someone to bleed him – and therefore he cannot straightaway go to see the Governor of Jerusalem, who therefore sends some representatives to him.<sup>10</sup> On January 17, Wolff personally goes to see the Governor, and tells him "that I was an Englishman, and had come here with my wife, for the purpose of remaining. That I came, therefore, to ask his Excellency's permission. The Governor immediately granted my request, and told me that I might stay here as long as I liked."<sup>11</sup> This, however, was no guarantee for the future, for at regular intervals one Governor of Jerusalem replaced the other. When the next governor came into office in the middle of April, nothing was changed concerning Wolff's residence permit.

It appears that Wolff, to begin with, mostly distributes Scriptures from his rooms at Mar Michael. Attempts by the Jews to have him expelled from Jerusalem fail; see below. One day in the beginning of April, Wolff's servant, Antonio, sells Scriptures in the market-place, which is followed up by a reprimand from the authorities, but they tell Wolff that he "might sell them at home."<sup>12</sup> On April 27, Wolff is introduced to the newly arrived Governor: "His excellency received me civilly," writes Wolff, "but observed that Jews – *especially Jews*, and likewise Greeks and Catholics, had complained of my circulating books printed in England, which he could not allow. I said that these books were the Bible and the Gospel; and I cannot be contented with this decree, but I shall try to get a *firman* from Constantinople."<sup>13</sup> Yet a few days later he gets permission from the Mufti, Taher Effendi, to "circulate the Bible among Jews and Christians, *privately*, but not *publicly*."<sup>14</sup>

So it follows that these restrictions were not so severe that they made Wolff's work impossible. It should therefore be taken with a pinch of salt when Kelvin Crombie, in 1991, writes this about Wolff's distribution of Scriptures and his witnessing to the Jewish people: "All of this missionary activity was carried out despite direct orders to the contrary from the Turkish governor."<sup>15</sup>

9 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 319.

10 Wolff, 208–09.

11 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 356–57. Cf. Wolff, 214, where the Governor "said no one would interfere with us if we staid ten years."

12 Wolff, 246.

13 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 13. He does not get one, of course.

14 Wolff, 252.

15 Kelvin Crombie, *For the Love of Zion: Christian Witness and the Restoration of Israel* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 21.

## Wolff and the Jews

March 1 is an important date in the description of Wolff's contact with Jews in Jerusalem. From this day the religious leadership forbade dealings with him. According to, for example, W. T. Gidney, this had no real effect, as Jews continued to come "in crowds" to Wolff even after March 1.<sup>16</sup> This is a view I am going to question.

### *From the Arrival on January 7 to March 1, 1829*

From his arrival and until March 1, Wolff has numerous contacts with Jews. By January 17, he has recovered enough from his illness that he is able to go out into the town. But before then, he had received visits from "more than twenty Jews, as well Spanish as Polish, to whom I proclaimed openly salvation by Jesus Christ, without the least preface; yea, even more distinctly, more openly than I ever did before. I have distributed among them Hebrew Bibles and Testaments."<sup>17</sup> Compared to his two earlier visits, he has to some degree changed his strategy: "I do not, however, seek the rabbies [*sic*], but the 'poor', for to the poor the Gospel must be preached."<sup>18</sup> This, however, does not prevent contact with a number of rabbis – sometimes mentioned by name. But it would seem that Wolff no longer believes that the long Talmudic discussions, which he had involved himself in during earlier visits, will lead to a positive result.

But contact is not necessarily the same as responsiveness. After a conversation with Rabbi Abraham Ben Jeremiah, whom he had already met in 1822, Wolff says about him: "I never saw a more decidedly obstinate character, determined to oppose every point, and not yield an inch." Another Jew "called on us, and told us he had found me mentioned in Job i. 7: *'Satan came from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it!'*" On the Sabbath, January 17, he has been invited to come and see the rich Jew Joseph Amzalag; "I never saw a Jew more fond of his money than he is." In Amzalag's house Wolff converses with "a great many Rabbies," but one of them had refused to shake hands with him. When asked why, "He said he was afraid that if I touch him he should become a Christian," Wolff writes.<sup>19</sup>

A few days after this, there is a clash between Wolff and Amzalag.<sup>20</sup> Amzalag had come to see Wolff already the day after his arrival: "We talk-

16 W. T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews: From 1809 to 1908* (London: LJS, 1908), 122.

17 *Jewish Intelligence* (1829): 319.

18 *Ibid.*, 357.

19 Wolff, 209–10.

20 Wolff had first met Amzalag (Amzalak, Amzalack), a rich English-speaking Jew from Gibraltar, in Acre early in 1822, prior to his first visit to Jerusalem. Amzalag had then introduced him to some Jews and also given him a letter of introduction to a Jew in Jerusalem; cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1822): 300, 348. Amzalag later settled in Jerusalem, where, among others, the English missionaries W. B. Lewis and G. E. Dalton met him in April 1825; cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1826): 134. After the clash with Wolff, Amzalag and John Nicolayson had some contact with each other; see next article in this series.



ed over the circumstances of my former visits to Jerusalem; he begged us to call on him and his wife."<sup>21</sup> During the following two weeks they met several times. Amzalag even asks Wolff to write to Lady Hester Stanhope and ask her to pay back the "money, she had owed him for several years."<sup>22</sup> Wolff describes the clash in the following way:

As I spoke to him always about Christ, and told him distinctly that the Talmud was a lie, and that he would go to hell, if he did not believe, he was very angry, and said that he would forbid the Jews coming to me; however, Jews come to me every day.<sup>23</sup>

Although Wolff, two weeks after his arrival, says that "Jews come to me every day," it does not mean that they are responsive to the gospel, which Wolff also makes clear in the same context:

Several of them, however, display such an obstinacy and wildness in their arguments, that my health is worn out, and my mind grieved; they never were so wild as they are now; but still there are some who give me much hope that they are not far from the kingdom of God, as is the case with Israel and Jacob, both of the Sephardim community; and it is remarkable, that I am mostly visited by the Sephardim, and but rarely by the Ashkenasim Jews.<sup>24</sup>

The break with Amzalag did not stop large numbers of Jews from continuously coming to Wolff. Until March 1, there are a number of examples of this, which there is no reason to question and which can be summed up in Wolff's words: "Jews continued to come in crowds, with whom I conversed whole days, some noisy, some very attentive."<sup>25</sup> At the end of February he writes, among other things: "I had at least forty and fifty Jews at once, disputing in the most noisy manner possible." And: "Forty two Jews came at once one day."<sup>26</sup>

Information about *distribution of Bibles* is, until March 1, conveyed in rather general terms: "We circulated a great many Bibles in Hebrew and

21 Wolff, 208.

22 *Ibid.*, 210, 213. About this eccentric English Lady, who had settled in the mountains of Lebanon, her political power, her eschatological expectations, and her relations with English missionaries, see the summary in Hugh Evan Hopkins, *Sublime Vagabond: The Life of Joseph Wolff – Missionary Extraordinary* (Worthing: Churchman Publishing, 1984), 72–75.

23 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 357–58; cf. Wolff, 214, and under the date January 22, 1829: "The last visit he paid us, he told me he should not come no more, as I told him such humbug about Christianity, and of Jews being converted." Later Wolff is told that Amzalag had come home "quite mad," believing that he had been exposed to witchcraft during his visit at Wolff's; cf. Wolff, 230–31.

24 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 358.

25 Wolff, 221.

26 *Ibid.*, 236–37. Cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 358, with similar high numbers for visitors, even if the precise numbers vary a little.

Arabic among Jews and Christians."<sup>27</sup> And: "A great part of our time at home was taken up with selling Bibles at a low price."<sup>28</sup> The material at our disposal does not allow us to determine the amount of distributed Scriptures. In February, Wolff, on a couple of occasions, expresses his satisfaction with the way these Scriptures were received. "Several other Jews called, with whose zeal, sincerity, and candour, I felt great satisfaction. The eagerness with which all of them read the New Testament is surprising."<sup>29</sup> And: "Rabbi Menahem, the most turbulent of the Jews, came quite calm, and appeared impressed with the New Testament. He gave me proofs that he had attentively read it."<sup>30</sup> These examples seem to be the exception rather than the rule.

#### *From March 1 to the Departure on June 13, 1829*

March 1, 1829, becomes a turning point in Wolff's contact with Jews. Wolff writes: "On the first of March, Rabenu Zoosi,<sup>31</sup> the Chief Rabbi at Jerusalem, pronounced the sentence of excommunication against all those Jews who should visit me."<sup>32</sup>

This ban seems to have had a real effect. After March 1, it is no longer said that Jews come "in crowds" to Wolff, as claimed by, among others, Gidney.<sup>33</sup> The focus is now on what seem to be the repercussions of the excommunication – the burning and destruction of Hebrew New Testaments, much the same as what happened in 1822.

Wolff writes: "The Jews burnt several of the New Testaments I gave to them."<sup>34</sup> He writes a letter to an influential Jew in Damascus – Raphael Farkhi, "Minister of Finances" for the Pasha of Damascus – and encloses a New Testament. He informs Farkhi that "the Chief Rabbi at Jerusalem has caused many of these books to be torn," and he asks Farkhi "to write to

27 Wolff, 215.

28 *Ibid.*, 216–17.

29 *Ibid.*, 229.

30 *Ibid.*, 232.

31 In the sources his name is also given as Zusi and Zuse; this is the Sephardic leader Rabbi Shlomo Moishe Suzin.

32 Wolff, 237.

33 Gidney writes: "The rabbi issued an excommunication which prevented the Jews from going to him [Wolff] for four days, but afterward they went 'in crowds'" (122). The source for this is doubtless the *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 358, which – admittedly – is tricky. Without giving all the details, under the date of March 4, the editors of the *Jewish Expositor* seem to have referred, and compressed, information about the time both *before* and *after* March 1. Things make sense when we consider the way the introduction begins: "We left Cairo two months last Friday" – the departure from Cairo had taken place on December 16, 1828. This implies that *some* of the information given under March 4, 1829, is about the time *before* March 1, for example: "Forty-six rabbies of the Spanish congregation visited us, to whom I proclaimed the Gospel of Christ." This interpretation is supported by what Wolff himself writes, on April 28, about the lack of contact with Jews after "the excommunication"; see below. Cf. also *Missionary Herald* (1829): 333, where it is said with reference to a letter from Wolff of April 24, 1829, "that crowds of Jews came and argued with him during the first two months of his residence, but that for the last month they had been deterred from coming by the excommunication of the rabbies [*sic*]. The Catholics are said to be quiet."

34 Wolff, 244.



Rabenu Zusi not to do so any more."<sup>35</sup> One thing is the naivety behind this enquiry, another is the way Wolff describes the reply. Instead of openly admitting that he did not get the desired assistance, he seems content that he got a reply at all: "There came also a scribe from Damascus, and his account was confirmed by many others, viz.: When Raphael Farkhi received my letter from Jerusalem, he assembled all the Rabbies and told them that he had received a letter from a great man from England, telling him that the Jews should become Christians. They resolved therefore to write to me a civil answer."<sup>36</sup>

When Jews stop coming to Wolff, he approaches, as a countermove, "a Russian Jew, who received us very kindly, and told me that he would procure me opportunities enough to speak with Jews."<sup>37</sup> But to little avail, which is seen in Wolff's comment on April 28: "The excommunication of the Jewish High Priests, however, is still felt, and scarcely a Jew comes near me, except one who professes himself to be convinced of the truth of the Gospel of Christ, and three Jewish ladies, who called on Lady Georgiana, and who were very inquisitive respecting our belief." In this connection it is amazing that Wolff can write with approval: ". . . the three ladies lamented that Jerusalem is now deprived of those liberally minded Rabbies, Rabbi Mendel, Rabbi Solomon Sapira, Abulafia, Secota, and Meyahez, who flourished six years ago."<sup>38</sup> As if, in 1822 and 1823, these had been on Wolff's side! It seems to have been forgotten that in 1822 Mendel had tried to prevent Jews from meeting Wolff and that Meyahez (Meyahes) had presided over the negotiations which had led to Wolff's promise that from now on he would cease distributing Scriptures among the Jews of Jerusalem.<sup>39</sup>

On May 4, Wolff writes that "the Jews seem to come back again by little and little." He disregards the well-meaning advice from some Jews to give Rabbi Suzin "a present" which might placate him. And further, on May 15: "The excommunication of the rabbies seems to wither away, for the Jews here begin to be very kind again towards me, and two of them have expressed their wish of being baptized. . . . I met with my old Jewish friends, who visited me frequently. . . ." <sup>40</sup> On June 1, he can write: "Joseph Maimoron, a Jew, has expressed his conviction of the truth of the Gospel, and he comes daily to me, and I pray with him to our blessed Saviour."<sup>41</sup> This individual was baptized in Jaffa; see below.

These events do not radically change the picture; Jerusalem is not open to the gospel. In mid-May, a Greek individual attempted to poison Wolff, and as a consequence of this, Wolff's activity was rather limited during the last weeks of his visit in 1829.

35 Ibid., 245.

36 Ibid., 249.

37 Ibid., 241.

38 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 13.

39 See *Mishkan* 49 (2006): 48–49, 56–57.

40 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 438–39.

41 Ibid., 440.

## Wolff, the Armenians, and the Roman Catholics

Throughout this period Wolff is on good terms with the Armenians.<sup>42</sup> The Roman Catholics are still dismissive of the idea of distribution of Scriptures in Jerusalem.

### *The Relationship to the Armenians*

The good relationship to the Armenians through this whole period is seen in the fact that Wolff has several meetings with Bogos (Boghos), the Armenian ex-Patriarch of Constantinople, who is now residing in Jerusalem. According to Wolff, Bogos had been forced to abdicate from his office in Constantinople due to an unsuccessful "attempt to reconcile the Armenian, Greek and Roman Catholic Churches with each other." In Jerusalem, where he relocated, he "has improved the Convent, and avowed his disbelief in the miracle of the Holy Fire."<sup>43</sup> Armenian Bibles are sold to Armenians through, among others, "Ahmed, our Muhammedan servant." Wolff maintains that Bogos "took a great interest in the conversion of the Jews; he promised to do all he could for these Jews at Jerusalem who desire baptism." Wolff finds it advisable "that the Missionaries who are in countries where either the Armenians or Syrians are, to have their converts baptized by some of the Bishops of those nations."<sup>44</sup>

### *The Relationship to the Roman Catholics*

The relationship to the Catholics is predominantly negative, which is hardly surprising. "The Romanist Priests have decidedly prohibited their flock from receiving the Bibles from me, though the edition I circulate is the edition of the Propaganda."<sup>45</sup> And: "The Latin monks told their flock that if one person belonging to their convent should take the Bible from us, they would apply to the Turks to have him turned out of the city."<sup>46</sup> This, however, does not stop the above-mentioned Ahmed getting a "Romanist" to purchase a New Testament for his son.<sup>47</sup> A few Jesuits from France receive French Bibles and Testaments from Wolff. Shortly thereafter, he is informed that these Scriptures were torn into pieces.<sup>48</sup>

## Wolff and the Greek Orthodox

The most surprising thing is that the Greeks, according to Wolff, participat-

42 In contrast to the growing tension between the Armenians and the American missionaries, caused by the fact that the earlier Armenian bishop, Carabet, has joined the Americans' work in Beirut; see *Mishkan* 57 (2008): 81.

43 Wolff, 228–29.

44 *Ibid.*, 253–55.

45 *Ibid.*, 218.

46 *Ibid.*, 225.

47 *Ibid.*, 253.

48 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 13. It should also be mentioned that Wolff, after he was poisoned, expresses his thanks to a Roman Catholic doctor who attended to him on that occasion; see below.





ed in the complaint made on April 27 to the new Governor about Wolff's *distribution* of Scriptures in Jerusalem; see above. Through the 1820s – and after Procopius' time – the Greeks were keen supporters of the Bible work, a fact which has been established in the earlier articles in this series. Is the Greek leadership now dominated by people who take a different view of the distribution of Scriptures? Or is Wolff's description historically inaccurate? Both explanations are possible. The point I wish to make is that the clash between the Greeks and Wolff, which led to their banning of him, is not *primarily* caused by his distribution of Bibles, but by circumstances related to the two "schools" for children that had been set up at the end of April 1829, and by Wolff's services in Arabic.

On April 28, Wolff writes: "We have now taken the whole upper apartment of the Greek convent of Mar Michael, containing nine rooms, at our private expense; and have already appointed a schoolmaster for children who might be disposed to learn the reading of the Gospel."<sup>49</sup> On May 4, Wolff writes that there are already "eight Arab-Greek boys"; in a letter from May 15, the number has increased to twenty boys. On May 4, it is said that Lady Georgiana "instructs a little girl"; on May 15, her school has grown to "seven girls of the Arab-Greek denomination."<sup>50</sup>

When the *locum tenens* Daniel Nazareth, the "vicar to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, residing at Constantinople,"<sup>51</sup> heard about the opening of the school, he was "much alarmed on account of the Turks, as they might make it a cause of tyranny upon them [the Greeks]. But on my agreeing with him that in case of any inquiry I would answer for it, he was satisfied," Wolff writes.<sup>52</sup>

The first schoolmaster was the son of Papas Ysa (Isa).<sup>53</sup> But soon after, the school was removed to the house of Papas Ysa and, as Wolff writes, "We were obliged to appoint the old schoolmaster, a man of 70 years of age, as teacher of the children. The real English of all this was, that the Greek Bishop did not like the children to be further instructed than just in saying their prayers."<sup>54</sup>

Contemporary with this school project, Wolff conducts services in Arabic on Sunday evenings which attract quite a few Greeks. "I had last Sunday [May 10]<sup>55</sup> fifty persons, who attended me with great attention."<sup>56</sup> Among these are also "boys" from the school; see below.

On May 15–16, Wolff is allegedly met with an attempt to poison him in the coffee-house which he normally uses for his conversations with Jews

49 Ibid., 13.

50 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 438–39.

51 Ibid., 357. In the 1839 material, he is also referred to as "the Bishop" or "the Greek Bishop." On his earlier visits Wolff did not have any disagreement with him.

52 Wolff, 251–522.

53 About Papas Ysa (Isa) Petros see *Mishkan* 49 (2006): 50; and 52 (2007): 30–32.

54 Wolff, 252.

55 The events mentioned in Wolff, 253–54, take place in May, even if April is given as the month; the days of the week and the dates do not correspond either. The most likely dates have been put in square brackets.

56 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 439.

and Christians, the place where he also invites the latter to his services in Arabic:

I went to the coffee-house, to converse as well with Jews as Christians, and drank a cup of coffee . . . in which I perceived a curious taste, I went home and felt unwell. Next morning [May 16] I went again to the coffee-house, to invite Greeks to the Sunday preaching, but as I was drinking another cup of coffee, I was seized with such a sickness, that I was obliged to go out, and in going home, I vomited several times, in such a manner, as left no doubt, either in my mind, or in them that saw me, that poison had been administered to me. My wife gave me castor oil, which removed the immediate symptoms, but I still suffer from the effects. There is no doubt the poison was furnished by Greeks; for, on Sunday, by permission of the Bishop, (after he had given his sanction in writing to our sending the boys to the old school-master,) an excommunication was read in the great church against all who should send either boys or girls to us."<sup>57</sup>

When Wolff looks back on this in 1839, he claims that the Bishop (Daniel Nazareth) had "been assailed by a number of Priests and Scribes, at the head of which was *Papas Isa Keturjee*, representing that we wished to make the children English, &c. and a great deal more such stuff, threatening to go to the Mahkame, a Turkish Tribunal." Wolff continues:

On Sunday evening [May 17], the Superior of Mar Demetrio, seated himself in Mar Michael, and when the boys came to the preaching drove them away and beat them. When the excommunication was read in the Church, a poor man, the father of one of the scholars, exclaimed, "Why is this? The Englishman has done a good work. He fed our children, and has taught them to read: it is you that are bad;" and left the Church.<sup>58</sup>

The cause of the banning of Wolff seems to have little connection with his distribution of Scriptures. Through his school and preaching activities, he crosses some boundaries, which the Greeks cannot accept, especially since it concerns the church's "children." Even if Wolff does not necessarily wish to "make the children English," i.e. Protestants, he wishes to make them something which they are not. When the children come to school, they receive meals; this could be construed as an attempt to "buy" them or their parents. From the end of the 1820s, there is a tradition among the Greeks that the Protestant missionaries also tried to persuade the children not to

57 Ibid., 439–40.

58 Wolff, 253–54. Cf. *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 440.



honor the icons.<sup>59</sup> In addition, Wolff in his preaching underlined that Jesus died “for poor sinners,” and strongly emphasized that Christ’s Second Coming would take place in the year 1847 – eschatological speculations which the Greek leadership probably did not want their children to be influenced by (see above, note 8).

### Wolff’s Mood on His Departure from Jerusalem

Wolff and Lady Georgiana leave Jerusalem disappointed and somewhat embittered. When he writes about it in 1839, he gives health reasons for this decision: “In the course of nine months I had ten attacks of inflammation in the liver; this induced us to leave Jerusalem and hasten to Alexandria.”<sup>60</sup> But this is not the full explanation. Wolff’s and Lady Georgiana’s mood on their departure is far better reflected in a letter from June 1, 1829, written two weeks before they left Jerusalem:

Our gracious Lord having now saved me from the deadly effect of the poison which had been administered to me by the Greeks, and which almost brought me to the grave, I must here express my public obligation to the Superior of the Catholic Convent, who sent his physician to me immediately, and whose medicine did a great deal of good. . . .

The excommunication pronounced by the Greek Patriarch [*sic*] against all those who would send their children to school, was one of the most treacherous acts that can be imagined, for I had established those schools with his sanction and approbation. The only reason he assigned in justification of his sentence of excommunication, was that several priests were against it. However, some of the Greeks are come back again, and send their children.

The report which the Jew Amzalack [*sic*] is spreading abroad, that I had bewitched several Jews, among whom he was one, whom I had bewitched so that he became quite mad, has had a great effect, so that the Jews scarcely dare to sit near me, or to touch me, fearing least the effect of witchcraft should come over them.

I intend, therefore, to leave Jerusalem after a few weeks, for some time, and go with Lady Georgiana to Alexandria, and perhaps come back to Jerusalem after a year. I never had such a trying time during the whole eight years of my missionary labours, as I have now. Letters

59 Cf. Neophytos’ “Extracts from Annals of Palestine 1821–1841,” in *Kirchengeschichte des Heiligen Landes*, Friedrich Heyer (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1984), 175. Here Neophytos of Cyprus describes how the Protestant missionaries feed the children in school, giving them a morning and a midday meal, and tell the children not to honor the icons. According to Heyer, this should have taken place in 1828 and should apply to the missionaries Jonas King and Pliny Fisk, which is impossible; King left the area in 1825 and Fisk died in 1825. Whether the error is due to Neophytos or Heyer, the matters they refer to might well apply to Wolff in 1829.

60 Wolff, 256.

of Jews come against me from Odessa, London, Persia, Constantinople, and other places.<sup>61</sup>

On June 13, 1829, Wolff and his Lady left Jerusalem. They never returned. Few people said goodbye to them, of the Greeks only the superior of Mar Michael, Yoel, which is in stark contrast to the leave-taking Wolff had in 1822 and 1823.<sup>62</sup>

Over Wolff's departure hovers the allegation that he used money in an attempt to enlist supporters for his cause.

### **After Wolff's Departure from Jerusalem – According to Wolff**

From Jerusalem, Wolff first went to Jaffa. About events related to his stay in Jerusalem, he writes from Cyprus on July 15. While he was in Jaffa, some Jews from Jerusalem came to him, among these Joseph Shuah Maimoron (see above), whom Wolff baptizes "in the house of the British Consul, which was, in ancient time, the house of Simon the tanner."<sup>63</sup> "He will soon follow us here," Wolff adds in his letter from Cyprus. Whether or not Maimoron did so is an open question.

In Jaffa Wolff also met approximately one hundred Jewish men and women from Constantinople; these had come to Palestine "for the purpose of dying at Jerusalem." One of these knows of Jews in Constantinople "who are disciples of Joseph Wolff." This person "promised to come to us to Alexandria, and then he will be baptized by me," Wolff writes. Whether or not he did so is also uncertain.

More important is what Wolff has to say about Papas Ysa:

After our departure from Jerusalem, the Greeks<sup>64</sup> and Jews accused Papas Isa Petrus to the Turkish Government, as one, who had become an English-man [Protestant]. The Governor, in order to press money from him, put him in prison. I heard it eight days after his imprisonment, during my stay at Jaffa.

Wolff intervenes through an express letter to "the great Omar Effendi, and desired Papas Isa's liberation from prison." Wolff continues:

Papas Isa was immediately set free; but as he would have been still in danger after my departure from Jaffa, he came to me to Jaffa with his two sons; and as Mr. Kruse, at Cairo, is greatly in want of a schoolmas-

61 *Jewish Expositor* (1829): 440.

62 Wolff, 256.

63 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 14.

64 If it is true that the Greeks accused Papas Ysa of having become a Protestant, it is not easy to explain Papas Ysa's friendly relations with the Greek bishops in 1831; see next article in this series.



ter, I sent him to Cairo. I feel nothing more of the poison which was administered unto me.<sup>65</sup>

It is difficult to get to the bottom of what exactly took place between Wolff and Papas Ysa. I shall pass over the question of how long Papas Ysa was in Egypt – and also the question of whether Wolff's words are a declaration of intent rather than a description of what actually happened. In 1831, when the next Protestant Bible-men came to Jerusalem, Papas Ysa was there. John Nicolayson heard his version of these events in 1831.

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### Concluding Remarks

Joseph Wolff's third and last visit to Jerusalem as a Bible-man was no success. It is true that he had contact with some Jews, particularly in the period before March 1, 1829. It is also true that he managed to hand out some Scriptures, but quite a few of the Hebrew New Testaments were burnt, and his work among Jews was limited during the last part of his stay due to the Jewish authorities' ban against him. But it was a cause for joy that the Jerusalem Jew Joseph Shuah Maimoron was baptized in Jaffa after Wolff left Jerusalem. What later became of Maimoron – if he adhered to the faith and stayed in Jerusalem – remains an open question.

Wolff's and Lady Georgiana's school project for Greek Orthodox children failed. He survived an attempt on his life, presumably staged by people with connections to the Greeks. The otherwise good relations that former Bible-men had had with the Greek Orthodox Church suffered because of Wolff's activities.

John Nicolayson would feel this during his time Jerusalem in 1831, which will be treated in the last article in this series.

65 *Monthly Intelligence* (1830): 14.