

CHAIM YEDIDIAH POLLAK – CALLED LUCKY



# Lucky and the Leipzig Program

by Kai Kjær-Hansen

Having lived in America during most of the 1880s, Lucky is back in Europe in the summer of 1889, where he immediately takes up his “mission work” – but not as in 1885–1886 with “direct” mission among his brethren according to the flesh in Galicia, as we saw in the previous article. Now he is focused mainly on “mission” among the Christian candidates educated at the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig, pleading for “indirect” mission to Jews through diaspora mission – i.e. through the building of living evangelical congregations in predominantly Catholic Eastern Europe. At the same time, he is working for a new beginning for the Hebrew journal *Eduth I'Israel* in Galicia. But this cannot be done without money – an embarrassing issue for Lucky.<sup>1</sup>

## Lucky, Wiegand, and Zöckler

In the autumn of 1889, Lucky is on a journey with Johannes Müller, mission secretary of the Leipzig-based Jewish mission “The German Central Agency.” The journey takes them to Kishinev – Joseph Rabinowitz’s town.<sup>2</sup> Here they met August Wiegand and Max Meissner, who in connection with their stay at the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig had also chosen Kishinev as the object of their study tour. In Kishinev Lucky introduces his program to Wiegand, and the two go back to Stanislaw, where plans are made for Wiegand’s future work. Having concluded his studies in Leipzig, he is to return to Stanislaw and engage in “indirect” Jewish mission through diaspora ministry.<sup>3</sup>

And that is what happened. In April 1890, Wiegand is back in Stanislaw, engaged by the Danish Israel Mission. The stay is a short one. Wiegand persuades his friend Theodor Zöckler to fill in for him in the spring of 1891,<sup>4</sup>

1 About this and about how Lucky got money to live on, see my “Controversy about Lucky” in this issue of *Mishkan*.

2 Cf. *Le Réveil d'Israel* (1889): 174.

3 Cf. Lillie Zöckler, *Gott Hört Gebet. Das Leben Theodor Zöckler* (Stuttgart: Quell-Verlag, 1951), 10–18.

4 Wiegand had shared lodgings with Lucky in Stanislaw, and Zöckler does the same. Cf. Lillie Zöckler, 14–15, 18.

and from the beginning of 1892, after his exams, Zöckler takes up diaspora mission in Stanislau, also engaged by the Danish Israel Mission.<sup>5</sup>

With this Lucky had made two friends for life.<sup>6</sup> Wiegand, who was living in Germany, functioned as his spokesman, and Zöckler, his close friend, was in Stanislau.<sup>7</sup> This could cause some problems for Lucky, who did not want to be associated with Jewish missions societies; some interesting notes from 1893–1894 have survived.

In the German magazine *Nathanael*, H. L. Strack wrote in 1893 that Zöckler and his diaspora work were supported by the Danish Israel Mission and that Lucky had worked “in connection and in mutual understanding” with Zöckler until the spring [1893].<sup>8</sup> Lucky objects to this in a letter to Strack, fearing that the note might be read as if he is a mission worker. Strack does not share that fear but prints, nevertheless, the following statement by Lucky: “As to employment I am in no way connected to the organization in question [the Danish Israel Mission]. Pastor Zöckler is an intimate friend and adviser of mine; the same as I am to him. Our friendship is . . . not supported by the Danish Israel Mission. It is of a purely private nature.”<sup>9</sup>

Why Lucky reacts in this way, and is unable to regard Strack’s note as an unimportant matter, will appear from the following sketch of the so-called Leipzig program or “new method.” Lucky became the principal architect behind this new mission strategy.

From about 1890, the Jewish mission societies are fiercely attacked and criticized for their mission practice. The criticism comes mainly from people who are, or have been, attached to the Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig. These people are “pious” and want the best for Israel as to salvation. Often the ammunition is provided by Lucky, while spokesmen for the criticism are Gentiles. It is no exaggeration to say that Lucky spends more time “missionizing” among Gentiles than among his own Jewish people, whom he loved so dearly. Few, if any, have fought against Jewish mission like Lucky.

## The Leipzig Program – A Brief Sketch

The Leipzig program, or “new method,” deserves a paper of its own, but here is an attempt at a brief sketch.

The Leipzig program is a mission strategy that confronted the traditional organized Jewish mission work, which was quick to offer interested Jews

5 Cf. my introductory comments in the article “Mrs. Petra Volf’s ‘Reminiscences about Lucky’” in this issue of *Mishkan*.

6 I cannot here go into a discussion of Zöckler’s opinion of direct Jewish mission carried out by others. He seems to have a more balanced view than Lucky.

7 Zöckler built up a large evangelical diaspora congregation in Stanislau, saw revivals, established schools, and built other “institutes.” A number of his reports were printed in *Saat auf Hoffnung*. Cf. also A. Wiegand, *Von Theodor Zöcklers Leben und Dienst* (Leipzig: Verlag des Centralvorstandes der Evangelischen Gustav Adolf-Stiftung, 1926).

8 *Nathanael* (1893): 184. On Lucky’s whereabouts in 1893, Strack writes that Lucky “has now returned to North America.”

9 *Nathanael* (1894): 64. In this note Strack mentions that Lucky is back in Stanislau, Galicia, after having been to America for the second time.



baptism, education in a proselyte home, and sometimes money so they could travel to Western Europe. In its most radical formulation, the Leipzig program said that no one of Jewish descent should be a paid missionary to the Jews. The use of paid Jewish missionaries was, it was said, counterproductive when witnessing to Jews. The traditional mission was criticized for de-nationalizing Jews who came to faith in Jesus. In Western Europe, there was no need for special missionaries to the Jews, Jewish mission, or special training for people to reach Jewish people with the gospel. This was for the churches to do.

Talmudic Jews were the primary target, and the majority of those lived in Eastern Europe. So missionary candidates should first of all have training that could help them to meet Eastern European Orthodox Jews. But not even in Eastern Europe should they engage in direct mission. The first task of a missionary to the Jews was to work for the formation of living, evangelical Christian congregations, in contrast to the Roman Catholic and Greek/Russian Orthodox churches; this would generate interest among Jews. The vision was to fight anti-Semitism and to call forth love for Israel in these "Gentile Christian" congregations. In other words, a missionary to

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the Jews should work from such a "diaspora mission," associating with, for example, congregations in the German colonies and making them ardent and zealous for the cause of Israel. The motivating factor was the salvation of all Israel at some future time. The few Jews who accepted the gospel were seen as a prerequisite for this future.

Even if a discussion about these things might be justified, the Leipzig program was often presented in an unreasonably polemical tone. About the mission carried out until then, Johannes Müller, mission secretary for "The German Central Agency," stated that it was not a question of a few mistakes but of a wrong principle. The earlier mission is, Müller claims, characterized by "proselytizing" [*proselytenmacherei*] and is of an "anti-Semitic" nature. The mission's proselytes are "scum" [*ausschuss*] and they deserve the Jewish term of abuse *meschummadim* – for apostates they are, having "lapsed from their people, its past, present and future." The earlier mission was only directed at individuals, not the Jewish people as such. It is among Eastern European Jews who have retained a Jewish faith that the gospel has a future.<sup>10</sup>

Gustaf Dalman reacts sharply against this "new method" in the article "Falsche Wege" ("False Roads").<sup>11</sup> He argues, among other things, that it

10 Cf. e.g. Johannes Müller's articles in *Saat auf Hoffnung* (1890): 156–68; (1891): 7–12; and (1891): 65–77.

11 Published anonymously in *Nathanael* (1891): 161–81, but Dalman is the author; cf. the information about this in Reinard Dobert, ed., *Zeugnis für Zion* (Erlangen: Evang.-Luth. Zentralverein für Mission unter Israel; 1971), 44, note 96. Cf. also *Nathanael* (1893): 47.

is not for the degree of Jewish national feeling to determine where Jewish mission should be carried out. Besides, when Joseph Rabinowitz received the gospel, it was not as an Orthodox Jew but as a Reform Jew. If the new method were implemented in Eastern Europe, it would mean the closing down of a large number of stations. Dalman agrees that the “proselytes” should not be unnecessarily alienated from their surroundings. The principle of baptized Jews remaining in their surroundings is basically a good one, but often they lose their livelihood when they come to faith. Therefore they need to be helped, since not all Christians are intended for martyrdom. And when Wiegand argues that only the missionary who awakens Jewish national consciousness is a (true) missionary,<sup>12</sup> this meets with strong contradiction from Dalman. Faith in Jesus is more important than national feeling. The Jew who comes to faith remains a son of Israel, but much more important is that he is a child of God, Dalman says.

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Wiegand also puts forward a scathing criticism of the earlier mission practice – passed on by W. Hadorn.<sup>13</sup> Wiegand is quoted as saying that the Jewish mission is sick from top to toe. About the forty-seven functioning Jewish mission societies, he says that this is “47 too many.” The mission has created a gap between itself and Judaism. Far too much money is spent on proselytes. These are most often the worst Jews, and when pious Jews observe them and their business-like relationship to the mission, they distance themselves from the gospel. According to Wiegand, the Jewish mission in Galicia is the biggest obstacle to Jews being converted. There is no result to show. Besides, he believes that it is impossible to missionize among Reform Jews. Christian doctrines need to be toned down; no Jew will accept the doctrine of the Trinity, etc.

G. M. Löwen, the Berlin Society’s Jewish missionary, does certainly not agree with that and replies sharply, saying that the gap between Judaism and Christianity has not been caused by the Jewish mission, it was already in existence. The mission societies do not have too much money, and there are strict rules for the spending of money on proselytes. He denies that the missions can show no results; he also denies that there ought not to be mission work among Reform Jews, and he can prove that there are famous

Oskar Skarsaune mistakenly assumes that Dalman is an *advocate* of the Leipzig program in “*Israels Venner*”. *Norsk arbeid for Israelsmisjonen 1844–1930* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 1994), 183–84.

12 A. Wiegand, “Zumitten Israels,” *Saat auf Hoffnung* (1890): 150.

13 Cf. W. Hadorn, “Eine kritische Stimme über die Judenmission, nach einem mündlichen Bericht des galizischen Judenmissionars A.W.,” *Baseler Kirchenfreund*, no. 25 (December 9, 1892). Hadorn’s article is thus based on a private conversation with Wiegand. In *Nathanael* (1893): 126–27, Wiegand contends that much of what he said in that conversation was ill-considered and that one does not in a private conversation have the same reservations as one would if it was meant for publication. He moreover thinks that Hadorn has misunderstood him on several points.



Jews who believe in the Trinity.<sup>14</sup>

After the publication of Löwen's article, Wiegand returns with his criticism: Through their Christianization, Jewish mission proselytes are denationalized. He maintains that the Eastern European Jews who come to faith must remain in their respective countries and be independent of the mission.<sup>15</sup>

## No One Against Living Christian Congregations

This is not the place to arbitrate between the conflicting parties. Each has an important concern. The literary feud shows that something important was at stake, theologically and missiologically, but it also shows how difficult it was for them to speak together and make concessions and avoid generalizations on the basis of isolated cases of, for example, proselytes' and Jewish missionaries' moral flaws.<sup>16</sup> Even though history does show examples of the establishment of living evangelical diaspora congregations, modeled on the Leipzig program, which attracted Jews, this "indirect" mission did not give the desired results. The accusation against the "direct" mission for its lack of results hit those who argued for "indirect" mission as a boomerang – perhaps even with double force.

Naturally, no one involved in Jewish mission at that time could have anything against living Christian congregations that emphasized love for the Jewish people. All those involved in Jewish mission at that time looked forward to the future, when Israel as a people would come to faith in Jesus. A crucial question for opponents of the Leipzig program was whether it was enough, here and now, to *prepare* oneself for that time; they did not think it was. Some of the Leipzig program's people seem to have been so intent on that future that they failed their responsibility to meet the Jews of their own time, in a "direct" manner, with the gospel. With some justification, the opponents of the Leipzig program could ask its advocates if it was more important to them that Jews who came to believe in Jesus retain their connection with Judaism rather

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14 W. G. Löwen, "Zur Abwehr wider eine neue Verunglimpfung der Judenmission," *Nathanael* (1893): 33–50.

15 A. Wiegand, "Eine kritische Stimme über die Judenmission," *Nathanael* (1893): 150–56. The article is accompanied by critical notes where Hermann L. Strack, who is an opponent of the new method, makes his opinion known.

16 The Swedish Israel Mission had, e.g., a situation in the late 1880s when the wife of the proselyte home's leader ran away with a proselyte; after some time she returned to her husband, who then left his post. In 1900, the Jewish missionary Paulus Wolff was found to have submitted a report about his work in Krakow that appeared to be an exact translated copy of a section from "The British Workman," May 1873; he resigned but was re-employed for service a few years later. Cf. Lars Edvardsson, *Kyrka och Judendom* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1976), 56–57.

than identifying with the Christian church through baptism.

To sum up regarding the Leipzig program: Struggle against all mission humbug. No direct Jewish mission and no paid Jewish missionaries, and for the Jesus-believing Jew, no national breach with his Jewishness. And an unresolved attitude about how Jews who came to faith in Jesus should relate to the Christian church.

Lucky won quite a few Germans and some Danes, Norwegians, and others who had been at the Institutum Judaicum over to his side. It should, however, be mentioned that not all advocates of the Leipzig program were as pronounced in their views and mission practice as Lucky was.<sup>17</sup>

For those who were born Jewish, who were then paid missionaries to the Jews and who worked energetically and faithfully to reach other Jews with the gospel in a “direct” way, Lucky was not, to say the least, a pleasant name. We will examine this in more detail in “Controversy about Lucky.”



17 Mission secretary P. Anacker contributes with an interesting picture of how Lucky was “used” in “The German Central Agency” (“Meine Reise nach Galizien,” *Saat auf Hoffnung* [1899]: 78–92). Lucky accompanies Anacker on his journey early in 1899, participates in a mission conference in Stanislau, even gives some talks himself, becomes engaged in a passionate discussion in Romania with Hebrew Christians who do not share his views on observing the law, and explains the difference between the Old and New Testaments to a couple of non-believing Jews.