

Lewis Abramovitch

Missionary to the Jews



by Catherine Wright

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The image of Lewis Abramovitch on the front cover was provided by Mr Abramovitch's great grand-daughter Michelle Honan (through Reuben Abramovitch).

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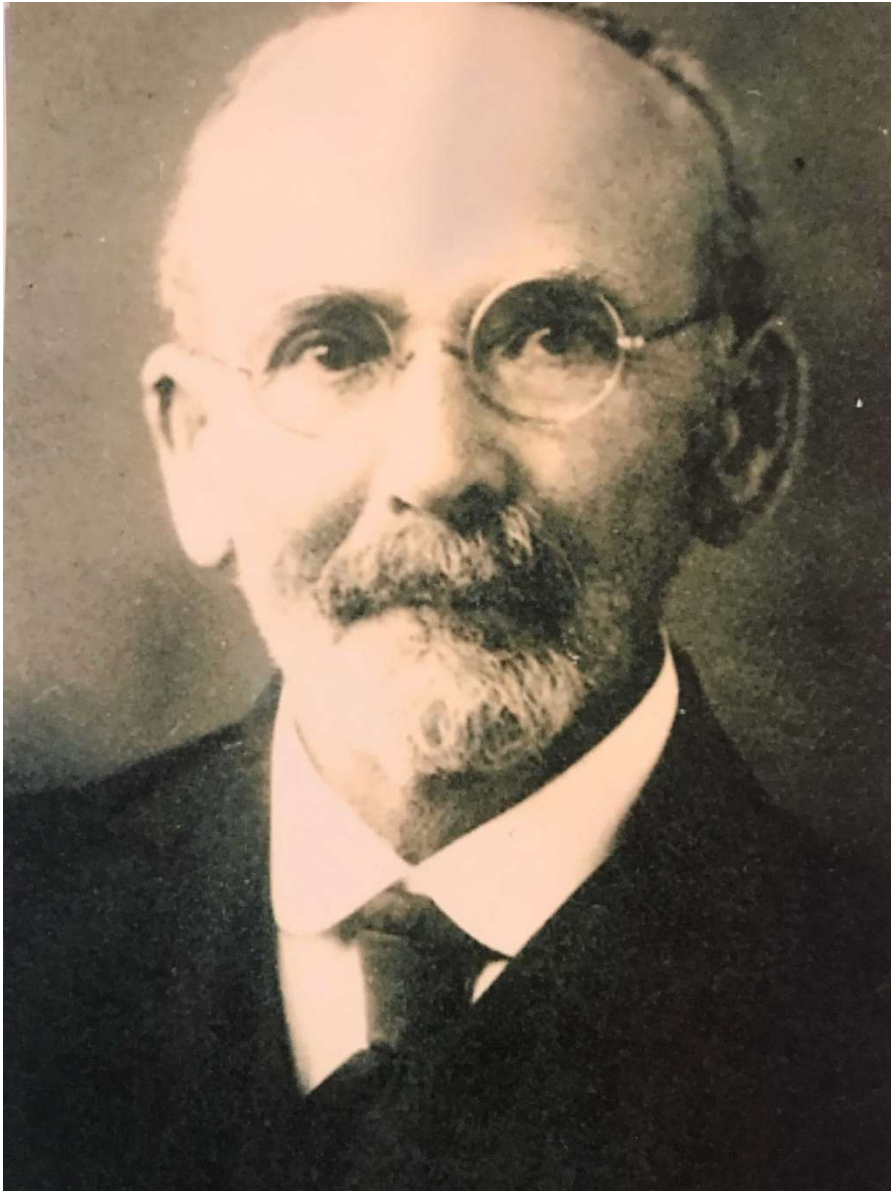


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Contents

Introduction	5
Acknowledgements.....	6
Early Life 1861 – 1892	8
Family Years 1893 – 1908.....	13
Later Years 1908-1935	21
Ministry to the Jews	25
Theology	32
Published Works.....	34
Lectures and Addresses.....	41
About the Author	46
Bibliography	47
Endnotes	48

Photo: Lewis Abramovitch - later years



Source: Michelle Honan

Introduction

Lewis Abramovitch was born in Vilnius, Lithuania in about 1861. He arrived in Australia in 1888. Almost one hundred years later, a Presbyterian minister by the name of Peter Swinn wrote a brief and selective history of Christian evangelism among the Jews in Australia.¹ In this he described Mr Abramovitch as “one of two Christian Jews who stand prominent in evangelistic outreach among their own people during the past hundred years” (p132). It is difficult, if impossible, to think of another Jewish follower of Jesus within Australia who worked as an evangelist among Jewish people over a period of some fifty years, left a legacy of impressive publications and founded an ongoing fellowship for Jewish believers – the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Australia (now the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia). This organisation was active well into the 1990s and has been renewed again in the past few years.

There were other Jewish born followers of Jesus in Australia in the period from the 1860s to the 1960s who were evangelists. One was Philip Lewis, who was known as the “Bush Evangelist” and was active from around 1896 into the 1930s. His ministry was not specifically to the Jewish population. There was Mr Menachem Ehrlich who was recruited to Jewish mission in Melbourne as a direct result of Mr Abramovitch’s influence and who laboured there from 1892 until around 1900. There was Emilia Baeyertz who was an impressive evangelist, but not exclusively to Jewish people and not exclusively in Australia. After Mr Abramovitch’s passing there was Miss Stargatz and Miss Black and the 1930s-40s and then Nathan Berjin in the 1960s – 80s. These were also Jewish believers working amongst their own people. While they had significant ministries, none match Mr Abramovitch for duration and legacy.

Lewis Abramovitch published at least ten booklets that we are aware of. Sadly, only five of these have survived and they are impressive. The surviving publications are based on addresses he delivered during his ministry. They are summarised in the chapter about his publications. I hope that publishing this book may bring to light copies of his “lost” works.

Little has been published about Mr Abramovitch since his passing in 1935. To date I have found only three references to him. One is the above by Swinn (1980). Another was a mention in the book *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985* by Hilary Rubinstein (1986). In this work she describes him as annoying and ‘antisemitic’, primarily because of his evangelistic work amongst Jewish people which was not appreciated by the Jewish establishment. His connection to the founding of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Australia was entirely lost until this research.

In contrast, from 1888 – 1931 Mr Abramovitch was frequently mentioned in the media and referred to as “the missionary to the Jews”. His many addresses and lectures were advertised in newspapers. His visits to various places for “missions” were reported, and sometimes his lectures were recounted at length in newspapers. One sermon appears to have been reproduced verbatim. Occasionally his lectures drew exchanges of correspondence through letters to the editors. These newspaper reports have been reproduced in a companion edition to this work.

Given that little was written about Mr Abramovitch subsequent to his passing, most of the information in this work has been gathered from those newspaper reports referred to above, from records of the national archives, from records available through Ancestry.com. and through contact with his grandchildren and great grandchildren. This has left significant gaps in his life story, in particular his childhood and life up to the age of around twenty-seven and a period from 1908-1919 when he was overseas in Europe and England.

From the available sources pictures emerge that show various sides of him. One is of a man who was very well educated in Judaism and Christianity. Another is of a man who was passionate about Jesus and believed that there was nothing more Jewish than to believe in him. The most enduring picture is that of a man who spent his life labouring to bring the knowledge of salvation through Jesus to his fellow Jews and to encourage his Christian brethren to care about the salvation of the Jews, no matter the personal cost to him. The cost was high. He did not receive much financial support for his work, and we see that from time to time, like others in the same endeavours, he had to turn to secular work to feed himself and his family. He spent long periods of time away from his wife and seven children so that at one point he had to be reintroduced to the younger ones as their father.

It is possible that many other facts about Lewis Abramovitch may come to light in the future. Any new information, whether it enlightens or conflicts with what I have written, is welcome.

Catherine Wright
Springfield, NSW
March 2025

Acknowledgements

This book about the life and ministry of Lewis Abramovitch would not have been written without the persistence of Mr David Perry of Hornsby, NSW. For many years he searched for someone to research and write it and provided some references to start the challenge.

Mr Abramovitch is not the only Jewish follower of Jesus that David has brought to light in modern times. He won't be the last either. David is persistent in promoting the recognition and remembrance of Jewish people who, during the first 150 years of Australian settlement, embraced Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) and ministered in his name. In this capacity David is also acknowledged in three books about Emilia Baeyertz, a Jewish evangelist and contemporary of Mr Abramovitch. He is also acknowledged in a booklet by Len Fisher about Philip Lewis who was known as the 'wandering Jew' and 'the bush evangelist' and was another contemporary of Mr Abramovitch.

In researching and preparing this manuscript I also tracked down and consulted with Lewis Abramovitch's great grand-daughter, Michelle Honan. I am grateful for the helpful family insights, stories and information that she provided.

Photo: The Young Mr Abramovitch



Source: Michelle Honan

Early Life 1861 – 1892

Lithuania

Lewis Abramovitch² was born in about 1861 in Vilnius³, Lithuania. His full name according to one grandson was Layboo Markuchkovich Abramovitch (Лайбоо Маркучкович Абрамович).⁴ His parents were Mordecai Abramovitch and Rebecca Naddle. At this point in the research nothing is known of them except their names which were on Mr Abramovitch's marriage record.⁵

Prior to 1795 Vilnius was part of the Polish – Lithuanian Commonwealth. At the time of Lewis Abramovitch's birth, however, Vilnius was part of the Russian empire under Czar Alexander II who Mr Abramovitch once described as 'a good man'. Thus, Mr Abramovitch was often referred to as Russian, and his nationality of birth on various documents was recorded as Russian or Polish – Russian.

In 1812 Napoleon visited Vilnius and called it "the Jerusalem of the North" because of the strong Jewish presence in the city. By the time of Mr Abramovitch's birth around forty percent of the population there was Jewish. The city was a preeminent seat of Jewish secular education. The languages of instruction were Russian and German while the language of business was Russian. Although many Jews were being lifted out of the lower echelons of society through the Czar's reforms, they still experienced many repressive practices. The young Lewis may have spoken Lithuanian, Yiddish and Hebrew within his community, but he was almost certainly limited to Russian and German in his educational and work context. His family say he spoke as many as seven or eight languages. Some of these languages, such as English, and biblical Greek, he learned after he left Vilnius.

In 1881 Czar Alexander II was assassinated and overt antisemitic persecution became rampant under the new Czar. In Vilnius there were also congested conditions and increasing unemployment. These factors led to large-scale Jewish emigration from Vilnius, and Russia more broadly, during the 1880s. Large numbers left for the United States and South Africa, and some went to Palestine. According to his family, Mr Abramovitch had already left Vilnius by 1877 and was working in Baku, Azerbaijan, two days travel from Vilnius. There, his family say, he worked as a notary, translating documents for illiterate workers who had come to work in the oil fields.⁶ This information needs to be verified as Mr Abramovitch himself, in a lecture, stated that he studied biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, including Hebrew lore, until the age of twenty (approximately 1880).⁷

That Mr Abramovitch had a very good rabbinic education is evident from his publications which variously refer to the Hebrew scriptures, the Talmuds, Midrashes and Jewish commentaries. Some sources go further stating that he was an ex-rabbi.⁸ Mr Abramovitch's knowledge of the New Testament scriptures, including the Greek they were written in, was also very thorough. It is likely that he studied Christian theology in England between his conversion in 1883 and commencing work with a Jewish mission in 1886.

England

In 1880 Mr Abramovitch left Russia and arrived in England. According to his family, his brother, who was a soldier, gave Lewis his passport which he used to leave Russia. He later posted it back to his brother.⁹ Apart from persecution, there was another factor that may have been decisive in him leaving Russia – conscription. From 1874 all Russian men, including Jews, were conscripted for a period of six years from the age of 21 unless exempted.

One newspaper article states that Mr Abramovitch left Russia because he was badly treated by Jews who resented his teachings and it had affected his health.¹⁰ As he did not embrace Christianity until he was in England and had to leave that country because of his health and treatment by the Jews, it is more likely that the correspondent made an error in the article.

In a lecture entitled *Why I became a Christian*, Mr Abramovitch states that he became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah after studying the Hebrew scriptures and subsequently reading New Testament.¹¹ In the latter he recognised that Jesus fulfilled the descriptions of the Messiah as revealed in the scriptures and taught in first century Judaism. He realised that the rabbinic Judaism of his own time was very different to first century Judaism and that concepts such as the trinity, which had been accepted in first century, were subsequently repudiated in response to Christianity. Lewis Abramovitch was baptised into the Christian Church on 15 March 1883 in London.

After his conversion Mr Abramovitch continued to engage with Jewish learning and community as will be evident throughout this work. This engagement is a recognised phenomenon of the Jewish enlightenment, which was very influential in Vilnius during the time of his youth. Greenbaum (1995) noted that there were large numbers of Jewish conversions to Christianity at that time. Many of these continued with their Hebrew writing and Jewish activities.¹²

In 1886 Mr Abramovitch was accredited as a missionary to the Jews and commenced working in this calling in east London for the London City Mission and East London Mission to the Jews.¹³ He lived in Dalston, a suburb of East London in the Hackney area. His connection with the East London Mission suggests that he may have been influenced by the Reverend Michael Rosenthal, a Lithuanian Jew, who founded that mission in 1877 and operated from St Paul's Haggerston. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to track down baptismal records from this church to confirm if this was the case.

While working amongst the Jews in East London, Mr Abramovitch's health declined "under the strain of his multifarious duties".¹⁴ An 1884 history of the London City Mission contains a harrowing description of Christian ministry amongst the Jews saying, "at times hostility was so bitter as to hinder progress. The first messenger to [the Jews] in the Old Clothes Exchange and Petticoat Lane was roughly handled, howled at with blasphemous words against his Lord, hissed by the women, struck at by the men, and pelted with mud and offal by the children". The history goes on to say that while there was outward derision, seekers did come to the missionaries secretly and that eventually there was a reasonable success (1884, Weylland).¹⁵

Mr Abramovitch was ordered to move somewhere with a more genial climate. He left England on Sunday 18th March 1888 on the ship *Port Denison* bound for Sydney in the colony of New South Wales. On the passenger list his name is misspelt as “Lewis A Cramovitz” He sailed as an unassisted passenger, his occupation was recorded as Missionary and his age as 28.¹⁶

The Colony of New South Wales

The ship travelled via the Cape with stops in Albany, WA on 27 April, Port Adelaide on 2 May and Melbourne on 5 May 1888. Mr Abramovitch was contracted to disembark in Sydney on 15 May. However, there is no record of his arrival in Sydney on that ship. Instead, on 10 May there was a report in the Daily Telegraph, Sydney, of a court case in which a Mr John Bromley, a miner, was found guilty of robbing Mr. L. Abramovitch, Jewish Missionary, of five sovereigns while they were both travelling on the *Rodondo* from Melbourne. Mr Bromley pleaded guilty and was sentenced to three months imprisonment with hard labour.¹⁷

The *Rodondo* arrived in Sydney from Melbourne on 8 May 1888. There was no Lewis Abramovitch on the passenger list. However, there was an L Cramority. Mr Bromley was listed as a passenger, so we know that Mr Abramovitch was on this ship. It appears that his name was mis-transcribed again.

In Sydney Mr Abramovitch was “heartily welcomed” by Dean Cowper and Archdeacon King¹⁸, as he came to Australia with the highest credentials from the authorities of the Church in England.¹⁹ Upon his arrival Mr Abramovitch was distressed to learn that there was no mission work amongst the Jews being carried on in the colony. On the 1st June 1888, with the assistance of Archdeacon King, he established a mission to the Jews. The patron and Honorary Secretary of the Mission was the Venerable Archdeacon himself.

Mr Abramovitch set about the work initially by door-to-door visitation and handing out tracts. From 1889 to 1891 he travelled widely to places such as Bathurst, the Shoalhaven, Newcastle and Maitland, and Melbourne, speaking, encouraging evangelism amongst the Jews and promoting his mission. On 2 April 1890 he set sail to Melbourne.²⁰ He returned to Sydney on 4th June after a month of speaking engagements there.²¹ More detail on his missionary activities are provided in the chapter on his Ministry to the Jews.

In June 1891 Lewis Abramovitch’s first booklet was published.²² It was about the genealogy of Jesus and was based on a lecture given at the YMCA in Sydney on 19th September 1890 and subsequently repeated in various locations. The publication was announced in various newspapers around Australia including South Australia, Brisbane, the Shoalhaven and the Hunter regions. More detail about the publication is included in the chapter on Mr Abramovitch’s published works.

On 31 July 1891 Mr Abramovitch was admitted to Moore Theological College, or at least his name was entered into the admissions book.²³ There is no record, however, of him completing a course to accredit him as a clergyman. Rather, Mr Abramovitch states in a letter to the Age in October 1894 that for 18 months he was a lecturer in Hebrew at

the college.²⁴ During the summer semester break of December 1891-January 1892 he was in temporary charge of St John's Anglican Church in Nowra.²⁵

Photo - Moore College Admission Record

No	Name	Age	By whom admitted	of admission	Term	Kept	Obtained License	Residence	Diocese	First Charge
188	Lewis Abramowitz	29	B. A. Schlicher	6/3/92	Retard					

Source: Moore Theological College

Photo - Arrival Record Ship Details

SCHEDULE B.
Form of Passenger List.

A.R. & S. 210-510-52

SHIP'S NAME	MASTERS NAME	Tons per Register	Aggregate number of males and females on board	Total number of Statute Adults, exclusive of Males, Females, and Children	WHERE BOUND
"New Services"	Samuel Moore Cox	2209	208	120	Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney.

I hereby Certify that the Provisions actually laden on Board this Ship are sufficient, according to the requirements of the Passengers' Act, for 120 Statute Adults, for a voyage of 35 days.

Date 17 March 1888 (Signature) J. H. 211 Master.

Names and Descriptions of Passengers.

N.B.—Child Passengers must also be included in this Schedule, after the other Passengers. Sec. 6 of B and 21 Vite, Cap. 51.

Part of Emigration	No. of Common Deck	Name of Passenger	Profession, Occupation, or Calling of Passenger	Infants		Children		Adults		Total		Sex	Age of each	Description of Passenger	Part at which Passengers have embarked to Land
				Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female				
Order	101	Jac. Payne	Seaman												Sydney
	102	Arthur Johnson	Seaman												"
		Henry G.	"												"
		Edith	"												"
		Henry	"												"
		James	"												"
		Andrew	"												"
	104	Chas. Jackson	English Drinker												"
	105	James Knight	Seaman												"
	106	F. R. Kimberley	Seaman												"
	107	J. R. Pungel	Seaman												Melbourne
	108	Thomas Bennett	Seaman												"
	109	Geo. Scales	Seaman												Sydney
	110	Geo. Coombes	Seaman												"
	111	Henry Davies	Seaman												"
	112	William Davis	Seaman												"
	113	Wm. B. Gribbet	Seaman												"
	114	James Gribbet	Seaman												"
	115	Edith	Wife												"
	116	Thomas Kennedy	Seaman												"
	117	Marcella	Wife												"
	118	James Wells	Seaman												"
	119	John W. Wells	Seaman												Melbourne
	120	Robert M. Waine	Seaman												"
	121	Edith	Wife												"
	122	Matthew Wilson	Seaman												"
	123	John A. Cunningham	Seaman												"
	124	Ben. Chas. Sullivan	Seaman												Melbourne
	125	Wm. Gray	Seaman												"
	126	Edward Pease	Seaman												Sydney
	127	Edith	Wife												Melbourne
	128	Geo. Pease	Seaman												"
	129	John Patterson	Seaman												"
	130	Frederick J. Thomas	Seaman												Sydney

Source: Public Record Office Victoria; North Melbourne, Victoria; *Inward Overseas Passenger Lists (British Ports) [Microfiche Copy of VPRS 947]; Series: VPRS 7666*

Family Years 1893 – 1908

Marriage

On 7th February 1893, at the age of 31, according to the marriage record, Lewis Abramovitch married Mary Bertha Lily Dalwood, known as Lily. This took place at St Simon and St Jude's Church of England in Surry Hills. Lily was 21 years old.

Lily was born in England on 28th August 1871 and arrived in Australia with her sister Augusta on 3rd September 1890, just after her 19th birthday. At the age of seven Lily was orphaned after losing her mother in 1875 and her father in 1878. Her oldest brother George took over headship of the family. Subsequent to their father's death, two brothers, Albert and Benjamin, had left England in 1883 and were already in Sydney when Lily arrived with her sister. The youngest of the siblings, Florence, emigrated in 1920.

The church where Lewis and Lily married was known to work with the poor of the area. The celebrant was the Rev. J. G. Southby, a personal friend of Dean Cowper and almost certainly also of Mr Abramovitch, as he had preached at that church and moved in the Cowper-King-Southby circle.

Lewis Abramovitch's occupation on the marriage certificate is recorded as "Catechist". This is the title of the part-time position held by Moore Theological College students when working in parishes and he may have been working in this parish. Lily's brother Albert was listed as one of the ceremony witnesses.²⁶

Lewis and Lily's first child, Flora, was born in Sydney in January 1893. There is no birth date or father's name on her birth registration. She is simply registered as Flora Dalwood. Benevolent Society records of January 1893 state that Lily was admitted to one of their homes shortly after Flora's birth, that Lily claimed that Mr Abramovitch was the father and they had met each other in 1892 at Mittagong.²⁷ Reading between the lines it seems that Lily's brother Albert, who was a successful Sydney businessman, became aware of this information and pressured Mr Abramovitch to marry her. Again, reading behind the lines it appears that Mr Abramovitch resigned from his position at Moore Theological College as a result of this. Flora went on to do missionary work for the Australian Aborigines Mission in the late 1920s and did not marry.²⁸

Within a few months of their marriage, Lewis, Lily and baby Flora moved to Orange where Mr Abramovitch was involved in pastoral ministry for the Church of England. There, as one of the local clergy, he attended, and gave a short address at the Methodist Church Anniversary in July. The work of the clergy in country areas in the 19th century was not easy. An example of the hazardous life is evident in a report that one day in September 1893 he was riding between Orange and Cave Crook when his horse threw him. It was feared that he had fractured his shoulder.²⁹

Orbost, Victoria

In late December of 1893 the little family moved, via a short stop in Melbourne, to Orbost, Victoria, where Mr Abramovitch took up a six-month position as minister at St James Church of England. The regular minister was on extended leave due to ill health.

While working in Orbost Mr Abramovitch was referred to as ‘reverend’. This infers that he had at some point been ordained for work in the ministry.

In January 1894 there were floods in the Bairnsdale area. Mr Abramovitch was appointed to the flood relief committee and tasked with finding out if there were any urgent cases of distress and dealing with them. Mr Abramovitch himself was impacted by the flood. He explained at a public meeting how some of his belongings had been stored in the flood area. Among other things, he lost Hebrew, Greek and German manuscripts that he had worked on for eight or nine years and a copy of a German book that was said to be the first book ever published.³⁰ This may have been his copy of the Gutenberg Bible.

Mr Abramovitch undertook regular pastoral duties in the parish including morning and evening services weekly. The topics of his weekly sermons were diverse and included *Unchristlike Christianity*, *The second coming of Christ*, *The Eleventh Commandment*, *What is Christian Prayer*, *Let the Dead Past Bury its Dead*, *The Wrestlers*, *Jonah and the Whale*, and *The Gospel and the Virgin*. These titles indicate that he was adept in speaking on a wide range of theological topics and was not limited to topics associated with Jewish ministry. There was a strong temperance movement in the 1890s. His sermon titled *Temperance*, delivered in May 1894 shortly before he left Orbost, was published by the local newspaper. It has been reproduced in the companion to this book.

As Passover approached in March 1894, Mr Abramovitch announced that a public lecture would be held at the Mechanics Institute, Orbost. It was titled *The Jewish Passover* and was to be accompanied by a representation of the last supper. The Bishop of Melbourne was expected to attend.³¹ Unfortunately, the event was postponed due to rain. There was also some controversy about the venue, the entry fee and/or the timing as Mr Abramovitch subsequently wrote to the local paper clarifying his aim in selecting the subject, time and venue and stating that he was happy to receive suggestions from members of the community on anything he intended to do in the parish.³² The way he communicated this showed great sensitivity and humility.

Although the incumbent rector was not returning, Mr Abramovitch was transferred to Neerim in West Gippsland at the end of the appointment in May 1894. He and members of the church regretted his going.³³ Mr Abramovitch wrote a lovely letter to the paper saying that he had learned many things there, that had grown to love the town and that he felt unworthy of the honour of serving there.³⁴

Little is known of Mr Abramovitch’s appointment at Nereem from May to September 1894. He spoke briefly at the opening of the new Wesleyan church there in July saying how much pleasure it gave him to see the new building and felt sure that souls would be brought to Jesus in it. It was in this address that he stated that he did not agree with sectarianism.³⁵ This is demonstrated in the fact that after working for the Church of England from 1893-1894 he was rarely associated with any particular denomination and spoke in churches of various denominations in each place where he held missions.

Melbourne, Victoria

In September 1894 Mr Abramovitch returned to mission work among the Jews, this time in Melbourne. One of his early lectures in this role took place at the YMCA in Melbourne where he spoke on the condition of the Jews in Europe.³⁶ Over the next 12 months advertisements appeared for Mr Abramovitch's speaking engagements at various locations including the Baptist, Congregational, Seaman's Mission and a weekly bible reading and address at the YMCA on Saturday evenings. Through this period the family were living at 367 Cardigan Street, Carlton, an address that Mr Abramovitch gladly shared in his letters to the papers from time to time. When Adina Dorothy was born, on 3rd January 1895 the birth notice referred to Lily as the wife of "the missionary to the Jews."³⁷

On 17th September 1895 Mr Abramovitch's name appears in a shipping list as a passenger of the *Wollowra* heading for Western Australia via Adelaide.³⁸ Within days another Mrs Abramovitch, with two children, was listed as arriving in Sydney. There were no reports of what Mr Abramovitch did in Western Australia or how long he stayed there.

In November 1895 an advertisement appeared in the local Prahran paper for "the Co-Operative Depot", a new store to which Mr L Abramovitch invited the public to purchase boy's and men's apparel. The advertisement stated that the clothes were sourced directly from the factory and he was able to sell them at discounted prices.³⁹ These advertisements continued into December. Unfortunately, on 23rd March in 1896 Mr Abramovitch found himself in the debt court being sued by Osment and Son, printers, for the cost of preparing the advertising copy. In court Mr Abramovitch stated that he was the shop manager, that is, an employee, and the owner, who had already taken back the stock, should have paid for the advertising. Mr Abramovitch was ordered to pay £3 10s with 2s. 6d. costs. He intended to sue the owner for the amount of the judgement, however nothing further was reported about this.⁴⁰

One week after the court case Lewis and Lily's first son, Gershom Samuel, was born on 30 Mar 1896 at St Kilda. Records show that the family was living in Barry Street, Kew at the time. Life as a 'faith' missionary with three children must have been difficult for the Abramovitch family. They moved often and the opportunity to supplement income, in this case, had not gone well. The shame and indignity of being sued must have weighed heavily on Mr Abramovitch.

Meanwhile Mr Abramovitch continued with addresses at the YMCA, the Baptist and Congregational Churches and various other venues as the missionary to the Jews. In October he was forced to write to the paper warning that some impostors had been going among Christians impersonating him and begging for clothes.⁴¹

In 1897 Mr Abramovitch submitted an application for naturalisation and stated his occupation as "manufacturer".⁴² His witness on the application was Mr Menachem Ehrlich, the Presbyterian Missionary to the Jews. Mr Ehrlich had been working in Melbourne since the early 1890s when he was brought to Victoria by the Church of England to run their mission to the Jews. This was at the encouragement of Mr Abramovitch in 1890. Now they were working in the same community.

The Friends of Israel Association

In early 1898 a new era started for Mr Abramovitch. He wrote to the Melbourne Herald responding to an article about the number of Jews worldwide and signed off as Secretary of The Friends of Israel Association.⁴³ He also started a Friends of Israel Association monthly prayer meeting at the YMCA.⁴⁴ Within this association and its advertising he was once again referred to as “The Missionary to the Jews” and undertook many missions and lecturing engagements.

From June 1898 until early October Mr Abramovitch spoke regularly in the towns of Bendigo, Ballarat and some of the smaller towns in the area. He spoke in churches of varying denominations and in public venues. His Friends of Israel Association was not mentioned in advertising for these and at one small place he carried out a burial service in the Wesleyan church using the Church of England burial service. During this period their second son, Elroi David, was born at Prahran on 20 September 1898 while they lived at 89 Peel Street, Prahran.

At the end of his time in the Castlemaine area and shortly after the birth of Elroi, Mr Abramovitch headed off to Tasmania to run a mission under the auspices of ‘the Friends of Israel Association.’ He stayed there until mid-December 1898 by which time he was exhausted and returned to Melbourne due to ill health.

An interesting insight into a more personal aspect of Mr Abramovitch’s character was a letter he wrote to the Launceston Examiner on 15 December 1898 praising the city for its Turkish baths which had been only recently established. He wrote that the whole experience was superior to anything he had known within Australia, England or the Continent.⁴⁵ A copy of the letter is reproduced in part 2 of this work.

Early in 1899 Mr Abramovitch and Mr Ehrlich developed a plan to set up education rooms in Carlton for reading Christian literature and Hebrew classes for children. The aim of the enterprise was to draw in members of the Jewish community which was large in the area. They hoped to make an appeal to all ‘friends of Israel’. The Jewish community was in an uproar. Their view was that true friends would not try inducing them to forsake their religion, and that the money would be better spent addressing social and moral issues amongst the gentile population.⁴⁶

In mid-January 1899 Mr Abramovitch returned to Tasmania on the cargo steamer *Kawatiri IV*, bound for Strahan in Tasmania via Devonport. It seems that he went as the clergyman in the local Presbyterian Church as he spoke at both services most Sundays and assisted with a wedding on 15th February.⁴⁷ He also delivered some additional lectures in other venues. He was, in fact, listed on the electoral roll as living in Zeehan after there was an objection to his inclusion on the roll in Prahran⁴⁸, perhaps because of the amount of time he spent away from home or perhaps because he had not yet been naturalised.

Mr Abramovitch was in Hobart and Launceston in late February for a week. During that visit he made appeals for funding for the education centre and then returned to Melbourne on 4 March 1899.

By May Mr Abramovitch was once again located in Ballarat for a few months, where he held regular lectures. We are given another interesting insight into Mr Abramovitch's health and state of mind in a letter he wrote in July 1899 to the manufacturer of a product called Vitadatio.⁴⁹ He praised the product and how it had helped him recover from being run down with overwork, worry and "brain-fag".⁵⁰ The product had helped him more than any medications that he had tried. For the next eighteen months the letter was used to advertise the product in Melbourne, Sydney and Tasmanian papers.

Mr Abramovitch did not have any advertised lectures or speaking engagements from July 1899 until October 1900. During this time, on 24th January 1900 Lewis and Lily's third son, Perez Othniel was born in Coburg, Victoria. A fourth son, Reuben Adiel, was born on 19 May 1902.

Much happened in the period between the birth of these two sons. Mr Abramovitch was naturalised as a British citizen on 20 February 1901. He was then aged approximately 40, however the age on his naturalisation record reflected his age when he made the application in January 1897.

From late 1900 until mid-1901 he held missions in South Australia. The first was from late November 1900 to the end of January 1901 primarily in Adelaide. He returned to South Australia in April 1901 to look after the Presbyterian Church in Port Augusta for three weeks.⁵¹ After that appointment he stayed in South Australia until the beginning of July 1901 visiting regional areas.

The Free Christian Assembly

From around October 1900 it appears that Mr Abramovitch had a connection with Pastor A.J. Abbott of the Free Christian Assembly which met in the Forresters Hall, Collingwood. The first indication of this was two addresses Mr Abramovitch and Abbott gave at the hall on a Sunday in October 1900. Next, in February 1901, Mr Abramovitch was advertised as the chair of the anniversary celebration of the Christian Assembly Sunday School. Then, from time to time, Mr Abramovitch chaired other advertised meetings of the non-denominational church. This association continued into 1902.

The Free Christian Assembly was established in Melbourne in 1883 as an "undenominational" congregation. Albert Abbott was elected pastor in 1890.⁵² The church and Albert Abbott were, from time to time, featured in newspaper reports regarding various scandals. In one, Rev Abbott was accused of inappropriate behaviour toward a young lady. In another, a brawl broke out in the church. The most notorious scandal was about Abbott's association with Holt's marriage agency which was frequently in the news for dubious practices involved in organising marriages.

In March 1902, while still working with the Free Christian Church and Pastor Albert Abbott, both Lewis and Lily were called to court as witnesses in a perjury case of an underaged couple who had approached Mr Abramovitch to perform the marriage rite. As Lily was completing the paperwork she realised that the girl was not yet twenty-one and Mr Abramovitch refused to perform the marriage until they had appropriate permission. Consequently, the couple went to Holts Matrimonial Service and were

married. During the court case Mr Abramovitch stated he was now working for the Free Christian Assembly and previously had been a Hebrew evangelist.⁵³ He also declared that he had been a Christian for 19 years which places his conversion at the time of his baptism in 1883 in England.

No further lectures were advertised, nor missions held for some time. There were mentions of Mr Abramovitch performing marriages in May, September and October 1902 and chairing a meeting in honour of the coronation in June 1902 at the Free Christian Church. Then in May 1903 a letter written by a Lewis Abramovitch appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald advocating financial support for the Jews of Southern Russia via donations to the Zionist Movement. It signalled that he had relocated to Sydney.

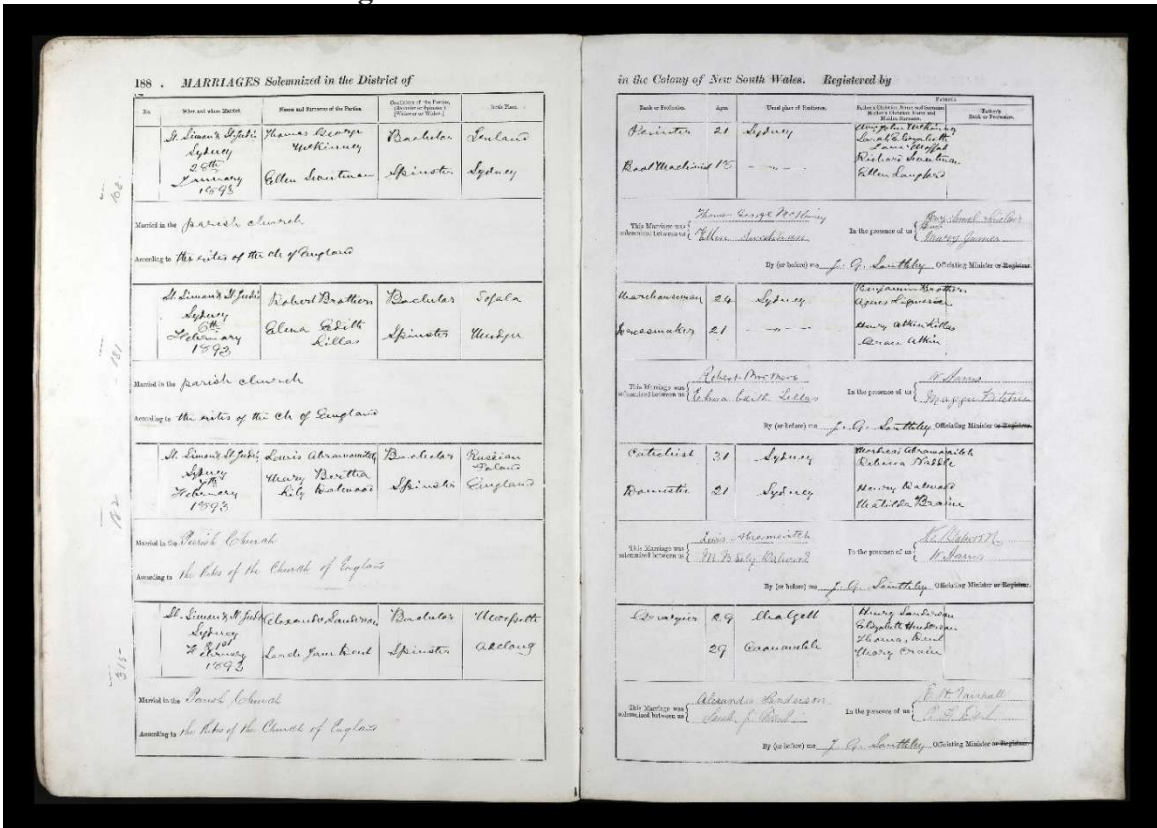
Lewis Abramovitch - Inventor

In December 1903 and into 1904, Lewis Abramovitch of Pine Street Chippendale, NSW, was involved in a court case (Abramovitch vs Block) whereby he sought to recover some £75 for commissions on orders for “ice houses” which the defendant was in the business of producing.⁵⁴ One might wonder if this was ‘our’ Lewis Abramovitch. Two items suggest that it was. First, a record of him leaving Sydney on Christmas Eve in December 1903 and returning to Victoria, and secondly a report of Lewis Abramovitch of 3 Prentice Street Brunswick, Vic, being granted a patent for “an improved cooling chamber”. In this patent application his occupation is listed as “inventor”.⁵⁵ Mr Abramovitch had become involved in the manufacture of refrigeration. His system was called ‘Everdry’ and was to be used in private homes and by dairies, butchers and fishmongers for keeping their produce dry for longer periods. A description of the system in the Coburg Leader in February 1905 appears to be the only mention of the invention in newspapers.⁵⁶

Electoral rolls show Lewis and Lily living at 3 Prentice-St, Brunswick in 1905 and 1906. In these years Mr Abramovitch is recorded as being a ‘traveller’. This information corresponds with family understandings that at sometime in the 1900’s he was involved in organising and leading tours to Russia for wealthy people from Melbourne. The problem with this theory is that there are no records showing Mr Abramovitch leaving or returning to Australia between 1888 and 1908.

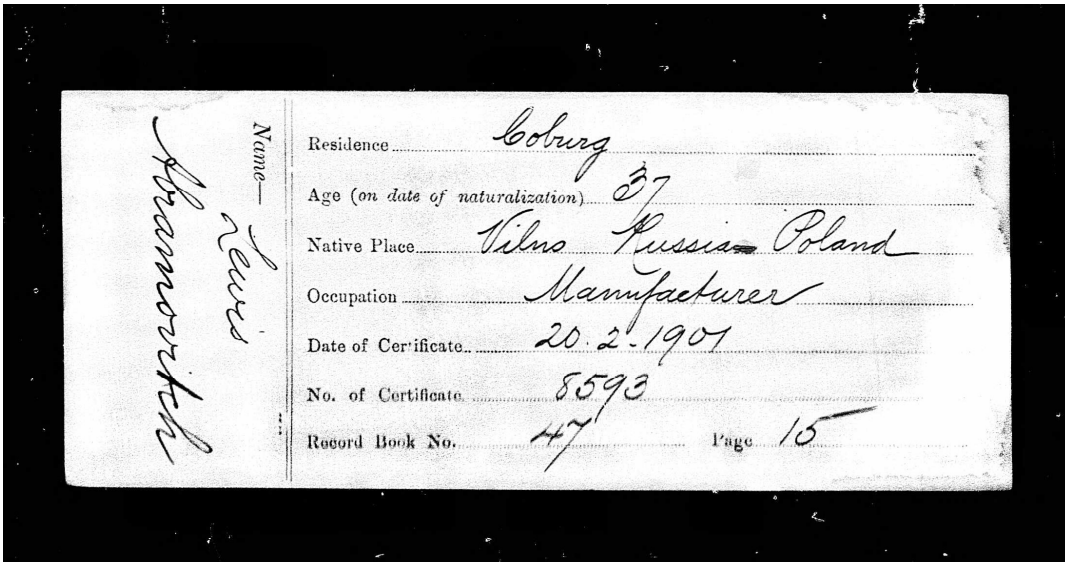
In 1907 the family lived at 152 Lygon St, Brunswick. Mr Abramovitch appeared in a newspaper report of February 1907 as presiding in a meeting of the East Brunswick Progressive Association and advocating for a widow who was fined for not sending her son to school.⁵⁷ He continued to appear in the press from time to time as a member of the association committee until January 1908. There is nothing to indicate what work he was doing at that time. His last child Lily Rebe was born in April 1907. Lewis and Lily now had seven children to care for with ages ranging from new-born to fourteen years.

Photo – Record of Marriage



Source: Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney; Sydney, New South Wales, Australia; Baptism, Burial, Confirmation, Marriage and Composite Registers in the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney Archives

Photo – Naturalisation Certificate



Source: VPRS: 4396; Series Description: Index to Naturalisation Certificates, 1851-1900; Reel Number: 1

Photo – Lily Abramovitch and children circa 1909



Source: Michelle Honan

Later Years 1908-1935

The Missing Years

On around 24th February 1908 Abramovitch left for Europe and England on the *Grosser Kurfuerst*.⁵⁸ He travelled as a third class passenger and did not return to Australia until November 1919. This was shortly after the end of WW1. His family believe that he spent some time in eastern Europe, possibly at Baku University, and some time in England, and that he was prevented from returning sooner by the war. They also said that he regularly sent money to support the family.⁵⁹

Lily Abramovitch remained in Melbourne for a time. It must have been difficult for her. In 1910 Gershom went missing for a time from their home at 49 Barrow Street Brunswick at the age of 14. At some time after this Lily apparently moved to Sydney as there was a notice in the Sydney Morning Herald on 29 May 1913 saying that she was returning to Melbourne and was auctioning some very fancy furniture. The auctioneer was Dalwood and Company owned by her brother.⁶⁰ In 1914 she was living in 133 Carle Street, Brunswick and in 1917 she was living in Sturrock Street East Side, Brunswick. On 30 December 1915 their son Perez (known as Pierre) was listed in the Commonwealth Gazette as passing exams for appointment as a telegraph messenger.⁶¹

While Mr Abramovitch was away WW1 broke out and during that time three of his sons joined the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and served overseas. The first was Gershom who signed up as under the name George Harold Adams in the 20th Battalion. In 1916 Gershom testified that he enlisted on 17 March 1915 stating his age to be 21 years and 11 months and that it was incorrect. He corrected this to 18 years and 11 months. Of course, he made this declaration under a false name which he much later corrected in a statutory declaration. On enlisting at Liverpool, NSW in 1915 his stated calling was horse driver and religion was Church of England. In 1919 he was awarded the Military Medal for bravery as a Lance Corporal. He later served in the second world war.

The next son to join was Elroi. He joined the AIF on 29 September 1916 at Brunswick and went to signal school. He served in England and France and was discharged on 11 May 1919. He recorded his religion as Baptist and his trade as Labourer.

The third son to join up was Perez who signed up under the name 'Pierre'. He joined the AIF in the wireless Corps on 21 January 1918,⁶² claiming on his enlistment form to be age 19 years. He was at the time about to turn 18.

He unfortunately died of head injuries in a railway accident in Belgium on 12 February 1919. He listed his religion as Church of Christ. Before enlistment Perez had been progressing well in a career in the Postmaster General (Victoria) as a Postal Official as evidenced by frequent promotions appearing in the Commonwealth Gazette.

It is interesting, but perhaps unsurprising, that each brother recorded a different protestant denomination. Except for a loose affiliation with the Church of England between 1893 and 1894, Mr Abramovitch's ministry was never connected with any particular denomination. We do know however, that the parents wanted their children to identify with their Jewish heritage and they requested that Perez's grave be decorated with a Star of David. The Jewish community later complained to the AIF about this but

were overruled.⁶³ We know that Mr Abramovitch was living in England in 1918 because at that time Lily wrote to the army office advising that she had, as sole guardian, signed the consent for Perez to join the army.⁶⁴ Furthermore she received a postcard from Gershom in 1917 who said that his father had visited him at his barracks in England.

Mr Abramovitch returned from England on 10th November 1919 on the steamship *Mahana*.⁶⁵ His son Reuben recalled being introduced to the man who arrived in a horse and buggy as his father.⁶⁶ Lewis, Lily, Reuben and young Lily Rebe moved to Lardner, Warragul, in Victoria joining Elroi, who had purchased a farm there. While still there in 1921 Mr Abramovitch spoke at a service in one of the churches when the clergyman went on holiday.

By 1922 Mr Abramovitch had moved back to Melbourne. He was living at 71 Cassells Road Brunswick and working as a joiner.⁶⁷ By 1924 Lily and Elroi (and presumably the younger children) had joined him there and Mr Abramovitch was working as a manufacturer while Elroi was working as a carpenter.⁶⁸

Little is known of Mr Abramovitch over the next five years. Their son Gershom married Lucy Hollis on 10 February 1923. Since returning from the war he had been working in advertising and by 1923 had his own advertising company and was well known in advertising circles. In 1924 he branched into selling traffic beacons to councils, a business that initially flourished as road networks developed. In February 1925 Elroi's property at Lardner, where Lewis and Lily had lived after Lewis's return from England, was sold. Their first grandchild was born to Gershom and Lucy in September 1926. Lily was away in England visiting her brother George and it was not until her return on 27th November that she was able to meet baby Olwyn. In October 1926 Abramovitch applied for letters of Patent for a laundry draining tray.⁶⁹

Founding the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Australia.

On 22nd January 1927 Mr Abramovitch convened a meeting in Sydney at which it was resolved to form a Hebrew Christian Brotherhood.⁷⁰ This was a fellowship of Jewish followers of Jesus and appears to be the beginning of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Australia.

Mr Abramovitch, now aged sixty five, applied for the old age pension in May of 1927, perhaps intending to retire. However, not long after this he was invited to work as missionary for the NSW Mission to the Jews which was established by Mr G.E Ardill. This was the forerunner of Christian Witness to Israel (CWI) in Australia. Mr Abramovitch, who was once again located in Sydney, worked for this organisation until 1931 when he had to retire due to ill health. He had throat cancer.⁷¹

As well as the NSW Mission to the Jews, Mr Ardill had also set up the Sydney Rescue Work Society in the 1880s and was still the director of that organisation into the 1930s. Mr Charlie and Mrs Edna Potter were interviewed by David Perry in the 1990s and recalled meeting Mr Abramovitch at the Society where they were all assisting. They described him as elderly, having a European, non-english accent, a Hebrew and Greek scholar, and the author of many booklets. They also said that he was said to be an ex-

rabbi.⁷² With his knowledge of the bible and Judaism it is not surprising that people of the day thought this of him. Mr Potter himself had worked as an evangelist in connection with Mr Ardill since 1922.

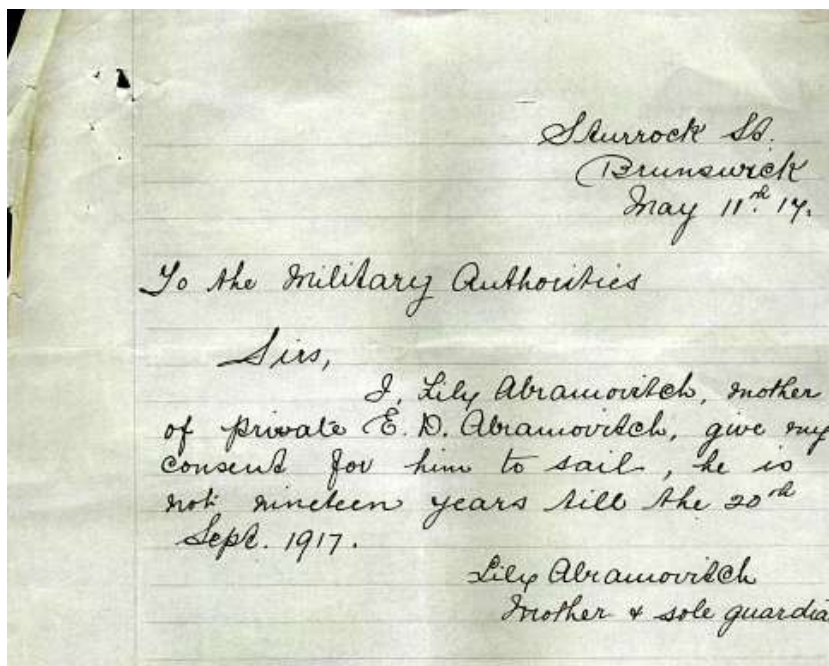
David Perry also interviewed the Rev Eric Marks who remembered Mr Abramovitch speaking one evening at Stanmore Baptist Church in Sydney in the 1920s. The topic was *Concerning the Jewishness and second coming of the Jewish Messiah*. Rev Marks was a young man at the time but was very impressed telling David that Mr Abramovitch "knew his subject very well."⁷³

After Mr Abramovitch finished working for the NSW Mission to the Jews he went on holiday to Tasmania in late January and early February 1931. While there he spoke in both Hobart and in Launceston and was well received. There the Hobart Mercury introduced him as "known in Australia and in other parts of the world as the missionary to the Jews".⁷⁴

At the age of seventy, in 1931 Lewis along with Lily and Elroi moved to 2 Nicholson St, Coburg.⁷⁵ Mr Abramovitch continued to list his occupation as missionary in the Electoral Roles.⁷⁶ His surviving grandchildren remember him from this time as a kind man who liked children. One remembers that he liked to sit in the sun and open his mouth to let the healing rays in.

Lewis and Lily were still living at Coburg on 2 September 1935 when, at the age of seventy-four, he passed away. He was buried at Coburg Pine Ridge Cemetery, Coburg, Victoria in the Presbyterian B, Grave 167. Lily Abramovitch lived on until 1965 when she passed away at Wahroonga, NSW at the grand age of 94.

Photo – Lily's letter to the War Office



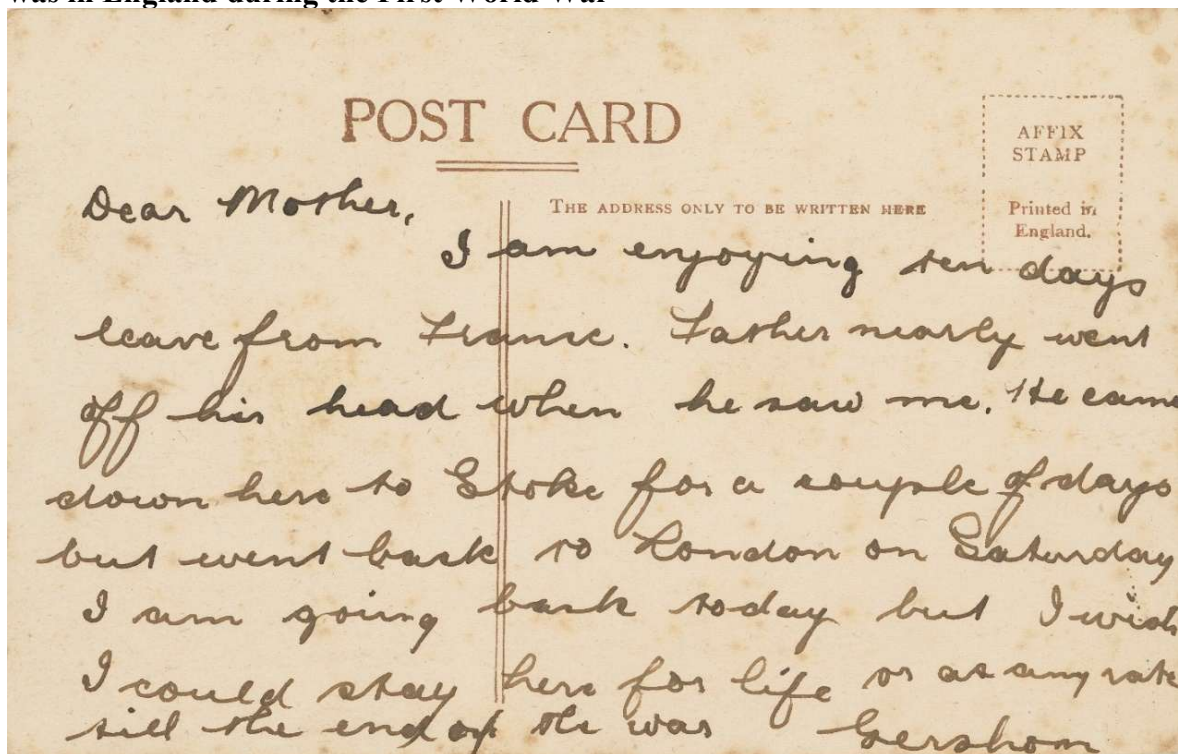
Source – Australian War Memorial Online Records

Photo – Postcard from Gershom April 1917 (Front)



Source: Michelle Honan

Photo – Postcard from Gershom April 1917 (Back) confirming Mr Abramovitch was in England during the First World War



Source: Michelle Honan

Ministry to the Jews

Work with Jewish Missionary Organisations

As previously mentioned, Lewis Abramovitch obtained accreditation as a Christian missionary to the Jews in 1886. He worked in London for the London Missionary Society and the East London Mission to the Jews in this capacity before emigrating to Australia for health reasons.

When Mr Abramovitch arrived in Sydney, Australia, in May 1888 he soon realised that there was no mission work being carried out amongst the Jews in the colonies. With the help and encouragement of Archdeacon King of the Church of England Mr Abramovitch established the Mission to the Jews in Sydney on the 1st June 1888, with himself as the missionary and Archdeacon King as the Honorary Secretary.⁷⁷ Mr Abramovitch remained in this role until he joined Moore Theological College in July 1891. In spite of the mission's name, his ministry extended to NSW regional areas and Melbourne.

After a time at Moore College and a short time in general parish work, Mr Abramovitch established the Victorian Mission to the Jews in October 1894, again with himself as the missionary. He changed the organisation name to the "Friends of Israel Association" in around June 1898.

According to a letter he wrote to the papers in 1894, he did not receive remuneration apart from support from 'the Lord'.⁷⁸ In other words, he was a 'faith' missionary, dependent on subscriptions and donations. We know from one address in Brisbane that collections made were not sufficient to defray his expenses for the trip.⁷⁹ This was quite possibly the case throughout his years working as a missionary. As noted earlier in this work, he periodically undertook secular employment and this was most likely to supplement a shortfall in funds.

From approximately 1901 until the late 1920s Mr Abramovitch does not appear to have been formally connected with any mission to the Jews in Australia. For about half of this time he was overseas. Then after a very long hiatus an advertisement appeared in 1927 that Lewis Abramovitch would speak in Maroubra Junction, NSW. In this he was described as "missioner to the Jews".⁸⁰ Again, in November 1927 he spoke at Boolaroo in the Newcastle Area and in February and May 1928 at the church of England in Miranda, NSW.

Peter Swinn writes that in NSW,

a fresh start was made to reach Jews with the Gospel in 1926, and on April 13th, 1928, the New South Wales Mission to the Jews was formally constituted. The society was founded by Mr G. E. Ardill, the first secretary and treasurer...

Lewis Abramovich, one of two Christian Jews who stand prominent in evangelistic outreach among their own people during the past hundred years appears to have moved up from Melbourne during the "twenties", for the Inaugural Minute records that "for some months past Mr L. Abramovich and Mr A. Eglitsky had been working quietly and as a result of effort put forth by the

former, a Hebrew Christian Brotherhood had been formed and occasional meeting held for prayer”. Following the election of nine Committee members, it was agreed that “Mr L. Abramovich be recognised as a Missionary Pro tem, and an allowance of the sum of Ten Shillings (10/-) per week be made to him to cover incidental Expenses.⁸¹

Mr Abramovitch’s work for the mission included creating and distributing tracts and distributing new testaments in Hebrew, writing publications (see Publications section), visiting, holding prayer meetings and giving lectures. He retired in 1931. Miss Gertrude Stargatt was subsequently appointed as the mission’s Missionary.⁸²

Taking the Message to the Jewish people

In 1888 Mr Abramovitch began his work for the Mission to the Jews in Sydney with house-to-house visitation and expounding to the inmates the truth of Christianity. He distributed tracts and new testaments both in Hebrew and English wherever they were accepted.⁸³ He continued with visitations throughout his time as a missionary. He said that he had been well received in Victoria [in 1890] by his brethren, who numbered over 4,000. The chief rabbi had been most kind to him, and after many conversations, they had agreed to differ. In Sydney, however, Rabbi Davis had been very hostile toward him and, in consequence, his work had been very hard.⁸⁴ This indicates that wherever he went he tried to meet and engage with the local Jewish authorities.

In 1898 Mr Abramovitch wrote in a letter to the Tasmanian News saying that, “There are hundreds of Jews in Victoria and New South Wales whose sentiment is Christian, whose religious ideas are practically Christian, and who speak of the Lord Jesus Christ with the greatest possible respect, and that some amongst them know much more of the New Testament than do a good many Christians.”⁸⁵ While he was not claiming that these Jewish people had embraced Christianity, it was a signal that he was meeting with numbers of Jewish people at various stages of the journey toward faith in Jesus. Mr Abramovitch may well have been paraphrasing Mr M. Ehrlich, who also worked as a Missionary to the Jews in Melbourne and had reported that while he was initially subjected to insult and refused entry to Jewish homes, by 1898 he was welcome to visit around 200 Jewish families in metropolitan Melbourne.⁸⁶

Another strategy for bringing the Christian message to Jewish people was to deliver open air addresses. In his early days in Sydney Mr Abramovitch did this at Paddy’s Markets and wherever Jewish people would gather. He also visited the Sydney domain on Sundays, which was a known venue for public speaking.⁸⁷ In these locations his audiences were a mix of both Jewish and non-Jewish people, but his message would have been oriented to the Jewish listeners, as were many of his public lectures.

Between 1890 and 1892 Mr Abramovitch periodically advertised and held Hebrew bible class in the Jewish Language at the YMCA. He also advertised conversational Hebrew and Hebrew language classes as he sought to build relationships with people in the local Jewish community.

Throughout his years as a missionary, and even when not in a formal missionary role, Mr Abramovitch engaged with Jewish people by carrying on correspondence through the newspapers. From time to time articles would appear in the mainstream or Jewish press that disagreed with, or misrepresented, something he had said in an address or in another article. He always responded to these. Sometimes he issued invitations to meet with the challengers.

On other occasions he wrote to papers to combat antisemitic sentiments and statements published in them. For example, one correspondent in 1894 claimed that “Poland was chiefly ruined by the polish Jews”. Mr Abramovitch responded that persecution of the polish Jews was a government ploy to divert attention from the real cause of ruin.⁸⁸

Many of Mr Abramovitch’s lectures were held in community venues recognising that Jewish people would be more likely to attend than if it was in a church – and they did attend. There were a large number of ‘Hebrews’ present at his first address in the Melbourne YMCA after he established his mission in Melbourne in 1894. This resulted in an article in the Jewish Herald belittling him. Abramovitch subsequently wrote to the Melbourne Age stating that he was misrepresented in that article.⁸⁹ Mr Abramovitch’s response elicited more letters to the editor, mainly disputing his claims of expertise in Hebrew and Jewish liturgy.

Finally, in seeking to connect with other Jewish believers, in 1896 Mr Abramovitch advertised to request that converted Jews and Jewesses to contact him. This would be with the aim of fellowshipping with these believers.

Missions away from Home

Mr Abramovitch travelled widely within Australia taking the Christian message to Jewish people in various cities and regional areas outside of Sydney and Melbourne. Some of these were short trips while others were lengthy missions.

1888-1891

During the period 1888-1891 Mr Abramovitch visited many places outside of Sydney. The first was Bathurst, in 1889. This appears to have been a short visit in which only one lecture was reported. In January 1890 Abramovitch was on holiday for around 10 days in the Shoalhaven. While there he spoke at Pyree, Nowra and Cambewarra on the topics of the Day of Atonement and the Jewish Passover. He knew of some Jewish families in the area and was eager for them to attend meetings although we don’t know if any did.

On 3rd April 1890 Mr Abramovitch sailed on the *Burrumbeet* bound for Melbourne.⁹⁰ He was there for two months returning on the same ship on 4th June.⁹¹ There are few details about this visit but we know that he lectured at the YMCA on quite a few occasions. As mentioned earlier, the chief rabbi had been most kind to him, and he had been well received by the Jews in Melbourne.⁹²

This mission to Melbourne should be viewed as outstandingly successful for the reason that it “roused among many Christian people, who heard [Mr Abramovitch] speak, some degree of concern for the spiritual welfare of the Jews living in Melbourne and its

suburbs”. As a direct result of that visit the Mission to the Jews of Victoria was founded by the Church of England in Melbourne. They applied to the London Church Mission to the Jews, and consequently Mr Menachem Ehrlich, “a converted Jew – a man most highly recommended – was selected by the London Committee – and subsequently approved and accepted by the committee out here...”⁹³

The next mission was held in the Hunter/Newcastle region, comprising a number of lectures over a period of a fortnight from January 14-28. It was not so successful at the time but from an historical perspective is very significant.

There were few attendees at his lectures in the Hunter, and it was noted that there were not many Jewish people living in the Newcastle area. However, there was good coverage from the newspapers that reported in detail on his lectures. For us this is a windfall as these are the only existing detailed descriptions of his talks on the Day of Atonement, the False Messiahs of Israel and on Recognising the true Messiah. In this third lecture he went into great detail about how Christ was one like Moses and the similarities between them. These articles have been reproduced in the companion volume to this work.

The mission in the Hunter/Newcastle region had various aims which were common to most lectures and addresses Mr Abramovitch presented. Firstly, to show how Jesus can be recognised as the Messiah. Secondly to encourage the church to have an open heart toward Jewish people and ministering to them. Thirdly, to remind the Church to be grateful to the Jews from whom the blessings to the church flow. This is primarily because Jesus was Jewish but also because it is through them that the scriptures have been preserved and their very existence is the greatest evidence of the truth of the bible. Fourthly, to educate Christians about the Hebrew roots of their faith, showing that the New Testament is more fully understood when it is in the context of the Hebrew Scriptures and an understanding of first century Judaism. Finally, in this list of aims, it was to raise funds for direct ministry to Jewish people, primarily the purchase of scriptures in Hebrew. For this a collection was held after each lecture.

For the best part of June and July 1891 Mr Abramovitch was in Brisbane where he spoke on a variety of topics. Various visits were held, mostly in Church of England venues. He was acknowledged at these meetings with being a representative of the Church of England as the missionary to the Jews in Sydney. While visiting Brisbane his first publication, *The Genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth*, was released.

1898 - 1908

Mr Abramovitch’s next mission was undertaken while he was working in Victoria under the auspices of the Friends of Israel Association. It was a lengthy mission, first in Ballarat and then in Bendigo, from May to October 1898. In these locations he covered topics such as Jewish religious rites and ceremonies, the Day of Atonement, Jewish missions, the Passover, and interestingly, British Israelism, which was a popular belief of the day. His addresses were held in Churches of various denominations.

From 1st November 1898 Mr Abramovitch undertook a mission in Launceston, Hobart and some regional areas of Tasmania. He addressed the ministers fraternal in

Launceston on Friday 11th November. The fraternal resolved to endorse the Friends of Israel Association and recommend it to other organisations and to cherish a special interest in ministry to Jewish people.

Mr Abramovitch moved on to lecture in Hobart and the north-west coast.⁹⁴ As a result of this mission a branch of the Friends was established in Hobart on 14th December 1898.⁹⁵ Some Jewish people attended his lectures and five of them who were at a Hobart meeting subsequently wrote to the paper about the message. This started a correspondence.

At the close of his ministry period in Tasmania in December 1898 Mr Abramovitch wrote to the Hobart Mercury thanking the people of the city for their attendance at his lectures and clarifying that his Friends of Israel Association was not connected to any mission overseas nor to any prayer Union in Australia.⁹⁶ He returned in January 1899 until March after a short break in Melbourne.

The last of Mr Abramovitch's missions away from home was in South Australia from late 1900 until 1901 – first in Adelaide and then subsequently in regional areas. While in Adelaide the South Australian Register quoted Mr Abramovitch saying that “he had been engaged in the mission work among the Jews for many years, and for the last six he had laboured principally in Victoria. He had distributed hundreds of New Testaments and thousands of tracts amongst the Jews. There had been a goodly number of conversions, and the influence of his work had been for good. Most of the Jews respected the missionary and his labours”.⁹⁷

The Hebrew Christian Alliance of Australia

The formation of the Hebrew Christian Alliance was significant for the Hebrew Christians of Australia. On Saturday, January 22, 1927 Mr Abramovitch convened a meeting at which the Hebrew Christian Brotherhood was formed. This soon after became the Hebrew Christian Alliance as evidenced by advertising of subsequent meetings with Mr Abramovitch's name as convenor. While not officially affiliated with the International Hebrew Christian Alliance (IHCA) it nevertheless had some links with the IHCA which was formed in 1925. These links were formalised in the 1960s.

It was reported that the inaugural meeting of the brotherhood opened with prayer. “Portions of Romans Chapters 8 and 12 were read. After deliberation, the meeting resolved that ‘those present form themselves into a Hebrew Christian Brotherhood to meet fortnightly’. They also resolved “to find a suitable room or hall where Jews could be invited for Gospel study and Bible reading. It was further resolved to procure a supply of Bibles and New Testaments for the purpose of giving a copy to any Jew desirous to read and study at home”.⁹⁸

These alliances were formed in various nations to provide fellowship for Jewish believers who were usually scattered within Christian churches. It helped them understand and maintain their Jewish identities while remaining followers of Jesus and kept them abreast of mission work amongst Jewish people in various countries. The Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia still exists today and is currently undergoing a renaissance after many years of inactivity.

Publications

Mr Abramovitch produced around a dozen booklets and tracts that we know of. These were useful for educating Christians about the Hebrew roots of their faith. However, a stronger motivation was to present evidence to Jewish readers that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah by showing that the claims of Jesus conformed to Jewish beliefs of the first century. His most elaborate and best known works, *Jesus the Messiah* and *The Genealogy of Jesus*, do this very well. More is written about this aspect of his ministry in the section on his publications.

Raising awareness of the Mission and its Necessity

Many of Mr Abramovitch's lectures were directed to Christian audiences. He educated Christians about the Hebrew roots of their faith and encouraged them to share their faith with Jewish people and to support his work, particularly through collections for the publication and purchase of New Testaments in Hebrew. One of his most impassioned speeches about the Christian's debt to Jewish people was made during a lecture at West Maitland in 1889. "He reminded the audience of the obligations under which Christians lie to the Jewish people. Each member of Christ's Church is a partaker of Jewish blessings. Our Saviour was born of a Jewish Virgin, in Judea of Palestine, the land of the Jews. He came from the line of David, from the tribe of Judah. He came of the Jews and brought first to the Jews the glad tidings of salvation. He was from the beginning predicted by holy men of old who were Jews, and to them the oracles of God were committed.

"The holy Gospel was first preached by Jews – the Apostles; the resurrection of the Lord and Saviour was first announced by a Jewess, – Mary Magdalene; the doctrine of the resurrection was first proclaimed by the apostles to the Jews, in obedience to their Lord's command. The first missionaries, the first martyrs were Jews. And Jews are a thorn in the side of all sceptics, for if the Jew were got rid of, the greatest evidence of the truth of the Bible would vanish. All the blessings which the church enjoys are Jewish blessings, since they flow through the channel of blessing which is, according to the flesh, Christ the Jew. The Jew had fallen that the Gentile might rise".⁹⁹

Funding his Ministry Activities

Little is recorded about the financial side of Mr Abramovitch's ministry. At times he was at pains to emphasise that he was fully funded and did not require collections to be taken up except to defray expenses. This was the case during his mission in the Hunter. At other times he was happy to receive subscriptions and offerings to support his ministry. This was the case during his mission in Tasmania. One thing is almost certain, as previously noted, that the funding was not sufficient to fully support him and we know that at times he had to resort to secular work.

Results of Mr Abramovitch's Ministry

Regarding results, Mr Abramovitch once said, "...my business was to do the work. So far as results are concerned: they belong to God, who will himself give the increase".¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless we can look at his work and see that there were results.

A Jewish person openly embracing the Christian faith is, naturally, the highest goal of a mission to the Jews, and also the most measurable. The Jewish community would

always seek to downplay any successes of the missionaries and accordingly the Melbourne Jewish press in 1899 declared, “The fact is that Messrs. Abramovitch and Ehrlich have not been at all successful in their mission to the Jews. They have laboured for several years in the Australian colonies without making a single convert worth having”.¹⁰¹ Yet Mr Abramovitch himself was reported in 1900 as saying that there had been a goodly number of conversions.¹⁰² We do know that one conversion in Melbourne, widely reported during the time that Mr Abramovitch worked there, was the son of a rabbi.¹⁰³ In 1898 Mr Ehrlich reported that, “some of those whom he visited were really Christians at heart, but were debarred from making an open confession through the fear of starvation in their old age.”¹⁰⁴ So there was modest success in this area.

Mr Abramovitch “believed the prejudice the Jews had against the Christian nations, on account of the persecutions they had suffered, prevented them from accepting the true Messiah, but although the efforts made to convert the Jews were fraught with much difficulty, yet the day, he thought, would come when they would all be found to have their belief in the true Messiah.”¹⁰⁵ It was one of Mr Abramovitch’s aims to help Jewish people overcome this prejudice by understanding the true message of the Messiah. To this end, Mr Abramovitch reported in 1900 that “he had distributed hundreds of New Testaments and thousands of tracts amongst the Jews. There had been a goodly number of conversions, and the influence of his work had been for good. Most Jews respected the missionary and his labours”.¹⁰⁶ Each tract and conversation represented a step toward undoing that prejudice and helping Jewish people understand the truths of the Christian faith.

In terms of helping Christians understand the Jewish roots of their faith and their need to bring the gospel to Jewish people, we have noted that the work was never generously funded. The work was, for the most part, not even supported by denominational churches. The exception was the Presbyterians in Melbourne which set up the Presbyterian Mission to the Jews in Victoria in the 1890s. Even this was unable to fund a full time missionary. Mr Abramovitch really did his utmost to overcome the ignorance which existed within the Church as to the real spiritual condition of the Jews, to whom he constantly reminded them that, “the Gospel was to have been first preached, and in the early day when it was so preached many received the Word gladly”.¹⁰⁷

There are two aspects of Mr Abramovitch’s work that we can look at and say they are still relevant today. Firstly, the legacy of his publications. The topics of his publications are still discussed today in Messianic Jewish Congregations and the information and arguments are still current and enlightening. Secondly, his establishment of the Hebrew Christian Alliance which still operates to this day as the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia. The organisation was active in the 1920s-1930s. It languished in the 1940s-1950s when its history was all but forgotten. It was revived in 1960 and was active until the 1990s when it again languished until recently. The rediscovery of his involvement in the formation of the Alliance is significant for the history of Messianic Judaism in Australia. Until this research brought it to light, it was thought that the organisation was established in the 1960s.

Theology

At the heart of it Lewis Abramovitch's Christian beliefs were based on evangelical protestant theological principles. The theological points that he dwelt on in lectures and publications were primarily those that were stumbling blocks to the Jews. These stumbling blocks included the accuracy of the New Testament, the requirement for blood atonement through Jesus, and the concept of a triune God.

Firstly, Mr Abramovitch taught that the scriptures, which included the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, were the divinely inspired word of God, inerrant and the source of all authority about God and the Christian life. His best-known booklet on the genealogy of Jesus went to great lengths to show that the various accounts of the genealogies did not contain inconsistencies as some claimed.

Secondly, he believed that salvation was through faith in Jesus who died as a substitutionary atonement for sin. In many talks on the Atonement, in which he contrasted the biblical observance of the day of Atonement with modern Jewish observance, Mr Abramovitch showed that the latter did not provide atonement and furthermore that reformed Jews, recognising this, were in the process of removing from their services, references to atonement being through the shedding of blood.

Thirdly the nature of God as a trinity was incredibly important to Mr Abramovitch. In his booklet on *The Lord Messiah: Who He Is, and how He Appeared to Old Testament Saints* he went to great lengths to show that the idea of God as a compound unity was inherent in the Hebrew scriptures and acknowledged by first century Judaism. He argued that the trinity being a major stumbling block to the Jews of the modern era was a problem caused by rabbinic Judaism which had repudiated the trinitarian beliefs of the first century as a backlash against Christianity. He went to lengths in his talks about the practice of Passover and the structure of the tabernacle to show how the trinity was demonstrated in each.

Mr Abramovitch did not accept supersessionist (replacement) theology. This was, and still is, a protestant belief based on an allegorical interpretation of the scriptures. It teaches that the blessings of the Mosaic covenant transferred to the church when the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah. No, Mr Abramovitch firmly believed that although the Jews were suffering now because of their rejection of the Messiah, God was not finished with them and would restore them to himself and their land and then Messiah would return. He believed the words written in Romans 11:11, "Again I ask: Did they stumble to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious."

Lewis Abramovitch firmly believed that the time was approaching when, the Jews as a nation "would look upon him whom they have pierced and mourn for me as for an only son" Zech 12:10. That is, the Jews would come to realise, en masse, that Jesus was the promised Messiah and turn to him. He believed that world events of his time were bringing about the fulfilment of prophecies regarding the restoration of the Jewish people as a nation, their return to the promised land and the subsequently the return of Jesus. Early in his ministry he saw this playing out as the persecutions in Russia were

forcing Jews out of that country to places where they would hear and believe the gospel. He also saw it in the increasing numbers of Jewish people moving to the promised land. Later he saw it in the rise of the Zionist movement from 1896, in the British occupation of Palestine and in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which the British government of the day stated that they supported the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and finally in even more increasing numbers of Jews immigrating to Palestine after the first world war and their rising nationalism. In many lectures he talked about these tremendous changes as being the signs of the times that God was restoring the Jewish people to himself and of the Messiah's imminent return.

Mr Abramovitch was not alone in these beliefs. He was an active participant in a sweeping and history changing movement. At the beginning of the 19th century a strong evangelical revival occurred, with a focus on missions and the authority of the scriptures. It included some very prominent people such as the Earl of Shaftesbury in England. One outcome was an interest in the spiritual and physical restoration of the Jewish people and consequently there was a phenomenal growth in missions to the Jews. At the time, those who actively promoted these beliefs were called restorationists. This belief is nowadays referred to as Christian Zionism.

The restorationists actively worked to bring about the physical and spiritual restoration of the Jews through establishment of missions to the Jews, by opening schools, hospitals and trade education centres for Jews living in the Holy Land, by encouraging the development of Jewish infrastructure in the Holy Land, even while it was still under Turkish rule. They also worked on the political front supporting the secular Zionist movement and advocating for the establishment of a Jewish state in the years leading up to the first world war. The Balfour Declaration in 1917 was felt to be a pinnacle and a sure hope that God really was bringing to pass what they hoped for.

It is very possible that Mr Abramovitch was also influenced by the dispensationalist movement that was started in the USA by Darby in the 1930s. In his booklet *The Times of the Gentiles* he refers to the period that began when King Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem in 604 BCE until the time of his writing as “the dispensation of Israel under God's governmental judgement”. (p6). He then speaks (p9) of the current dispensation of Grace in which God has taken gentiles (ie the church) from out of the gentiles and taken them as “a people for his name” Acts 15:14-17. He wrote of the dispensation of the Jewish acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah.¹⁰⁸

Mr Abramovitch said that he was a Christian because he was a Jew – that believing that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel is the natural Jewish response. Hence there was no need to ‘convert’ as such, but simply to continue in the Jewish faith in its natural conclusion. Rather than ‘a converted Jew’ or ‘Christian Jew’ Mr Abramovitch preferred to be known as a Jew who had embraced Christian belief. He once said that he was a Jew who having held a portion of the Jewish religion had taken hold of the remainder of it – that comprised in the Christian doctrine. Christ was a Jew in religion as well as in race, and the whole of the Jewish religion was the Christian religion. We can see from the topics of his lectures that Mr Abramovitch believed that it was important for both Jews and Christians to understand how the Hebrew scriptures pointed to Jesus as the Messiah in the New Testament.

Published Works

Within a short time of his arrival in Australia, Lewis Abramovitch was involved in speaking at various churches and other institutions. The text of some of his addresses were published as booklets. Others were summarised in newspaper articles. The booklets were widely sold in bookshops in their day, but there are now very few copies of these remaining. For this reason the following summaries are provided of those booklets and addresses or lectures for which we still have a record.

Essay on the Genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth

In 1891, with the encouragement of a friend, who he does not name, but who was well known and highly esteemed in the public arena, and was probably Archdeacon King, Mr Abramovitch published this seventy-four-page work. The full title was *An Essay on the genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth based upon the New Testament and supported by The Old Testament, the Talmud and other Jewish Tradition*. This publication was based on a lecture he delivered at the YMCA in Sydney on 16 September 1890.¹⁰⁹ Advertising for the lecture specifically invited Hebrew brethren to attend and ask questions.¹¹⁰ This booklet was one of his most popular published works.

In the preface Mr Abramovitch states that the object of the work was to show that ‘apparent discrepancies’ between the gospels of Matthew and Luke could be overcome and solved.¹¹¹ His purpose was to address the objections of people who reject the bible as the truth because of what they believe are errors and inconsistencies in it. Mr Abramovitch recognised that the differing genealogical accounts in the two gospels were the most glaring of these apparent discrepancies.¹¹² He also wrote to strengthen the faith of believers who struggle with the differing accounts.

In this essay Mr Abramovitch quoted from a plethora of Jewish authorities (Jerusalem Talmud, Babylonian Talmud, various midrashim, the Apocrypha etc.) to make his points. Many of these quotes were from editions published in the 1870s or 1880s suggesting that the books were in his own collection and probably purchased for his studies.

In the first section, Mr Abramovitch used scriptural and traditional Jewish sources to stress the importance of genealogies in Judaism particularly for reasons of inheritance and proving title to land. He cited evidence that family registers were rigorously maintained even up to the end of the first century, well within the time of Jesus so that the gospel accounts could be challenged if found to be incorrect. He then showed, from the New Testament and other first century Jewish writings, that Jesus was widely recognised in his time as a ‘son of David’ and that even the Talmud does not speak against his Davidic descent. Some later writers question it, however these came long after the genealogical records had been destroyed.

In the next sections Mr Abramovitch looked at the genealogies of Matthew and Luke in the context of the purpose of each Gospel and then addressed each apparent error. He demonstrated, with examples, that Matthew and Luke used accepted conventions of the day for writing genealogies. While for us they appear incomplete and subsequently inaccurate, they would not have been questioned in the first century.

Mr Abramovitch pointed out that the first reason the two genealogies were different was because Matthew's genealogy followed Joseph's line while Luke's followed Mary's line. Matthew was writing primarily for a Jewish audience and as such based his genealogy on the father's line, because in oral law women were generally excluded (although some exceptions were made for very revered women). Matthew marked two significant way points – David, the great king, and Abraham, the father of their nation. Matthew then divided the generations into three eras with equal numbers of generations between each, which was an accepted way of writing to aid memory. The fact that the divisions were not exactly equal and that some generations were missed was within acceptable limits as readers would recognise the convention of creating a memorable pattern. Where the four kings – Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah and Jehoiakim are omitted from the genealogy, Mr Abramovitch explained that this was another convention. These four kings were frequently omitted in genealogies due to their wickedness. According to the Talmud their wickedness was sufficient reason to omit them. In summary “the Evangelist, therefore, in designedly omitting these names shows how much he knew of the history of Israel, as well as of the Word of God.”¹¹³ Mr Abramovitch continued through the genealogy explaining, from the scriptures and Jewish tradition other apparent discrepancies.

Similarly, Mr Abramovitch proceeded through Luke's genealogy addressing each apparent error. Luke wrote for all nations. His genealogy was intended to demonstrate that Jesus was not only the son of David, but also the son of Adam, who is the father of all men. As such he was the ‘seed of woman’ who came to bruise the serpent's head. Thus, Luke followed Mary's line. Joseph's named ‘father’, Eli, was actually Mary's father. This, he shows, was another acceptable convention wherein the father or mother-in-law is referred to as ‘father’ or ‘mother’. That Eli was Mary's father is confirmed as such in the Talmud along with the confirmation that the family was from the royal line of David, and not Levi as some argued. Mr Abramovitch showed that even according to some Jewish tradition of that time, the Messiah would be fatherless.

Mr Abramovitch concluded by encouraging readers to give special and persevering study to difficult matters before offering an opinion and provided a succinct summary of his answers to the main ‘errors’ in the genealogies.

The Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ

Another of Mr Abramovitch's more popular booklets was *The Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ: Who was Responsible?*¹¹⁴ Mr Abramovitch lectured on this topic numerous times, the first being in August 1890 and the last being in 1931. It was originally published in Bendigo. While the original publication date is not known, this 16-page booklet was republished in 1966 by the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Australia due to public interest in the topic resulting from decisions of the Second Vatican Council (1965). Specifically, the council issued a statement that the Jewish people cannot be collectively held responsible for the crucifixion.

In this booklet Mr Abramovitch sets out to disprove three common arguments against Christianity used by Jewish people, namely that (a) Jesus's crucifixion shows he was not the Messiah, (b) that if he was the Messiah he would have been accepted by the Jews and (c) that his crucifixion was just punishment under Jewish law.

To set the context in which the events of the crucifixion happened Mr Abramovitch introduces the reader to the religious and political conditions in Jewish society in the ninety years leading up to the event. In particular, quoting Josephus, he dwells upon the feeling of dissatisfaction that grew daily under the yoke of the foreigner and their atrocities. The hope of political salvation from a Messiah was never stronger. Mr Abramovitch then describes the various groups within religious society, being the Pharisees, the Saducees and the Essenes.

Having set the context Mr Abramovitch then made his case in numbered points. First, that the Jewish aristocracy, and in particular, the Saducees were jealous of Jesus. At every point the Pharisees and Saducees tried to catch him out with words or actions so they could accuse him of some religious or political crime. Eventually through Judas they arrested him and charged him with blasphemy, a crime punishable by death. But they were unable to carry out the sentence themselves and took him to Pilate. However, the Roman court could not hear a case of blasphemy and so the charge was changed to treason.

Mr Abramovitch then moved on to list ten ways in which, according to Jewish law, the trial of Jesus was illegal, carried out by an unprincipled, unscrupulous and jealous hierarchy. He then listed eleven recognised messianic prophecies that were fulfilled through the events of the trial and crucifixion showing that even when men seek to move against God's anointed, God's purposes are achieved and His name glorified. He concluded that it was the priestly rulers – the house of Annas – that were responsible for the crucifixion and that their actions brought about the fulfilment of many messianic prophecies and proved him to be the Messiah.

The Times of the Gentiles

In 1928 Mr Abramovitch published *The Times of the Gentiles: a Warning and Encouragement to Believers*. This booklet of 31 pages was published in Sydney.¹¹⁵ Mr Abramovitch states that this work is based on an address delivered at a united meeting in the Sydney suburb of Southerland, NSW on 10 November 1927. The foreword of this booklet was written by H.G. Hercus, Pastor of the Burton Street Baptist Tabernacle in Sydney. Mr Abramovitch frequently held meetings at this venue and in 1935 Hercus was chairman of the NSW Mission to the Jews.

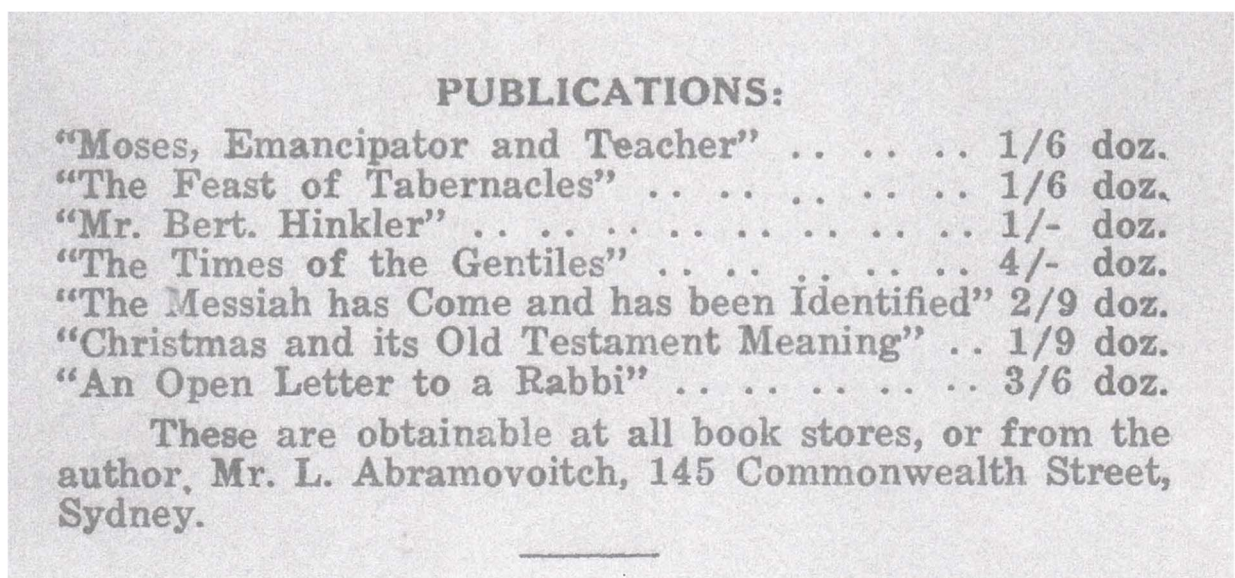
The booklet is written in the context of post WW1, a time at which many Jews were returning to the Holy Land after it had been released from Turkish rule and while it was under the British Mandate. Mr Abramovitch describes the phrase “the times of the Gentiles” of which the Lord speaks in Luke 21:24 as a ‘dispensation’ or period in which Gentiles have rule over Israel. This started in 604 BCE when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem. He contrasts this phrase in Luke with St Paul's phrase in Romans 11:25 that “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.” This, Abramovitch explains, refers to a set number of gentiles being called into the kingdom at which time Israel's blindness to the messiahship of Jesus will be removed.

Mr Abramovitch explains that before the return of the Jews from Babylon there was a proclamation, and that similarly before the end of the times of the Gentiles, there was a

declaration in the form of the Balfour Declaration made in October 1917, reaffirmed in September 1919 and approved in 1920 by the League of Nations.

The Lord Messiah

In 1930 Mr Abramovitch published a forty-seven page booklet titled *The Lord Messiah: Who He Is, and how He Appeared to Old Testament Saints*.¹¹⁶ This booklet was based on a lecture delivered at the School of Arts, Pitt St., Sydney on 24 June, 1929. It was one of Mr Abramovitch's best known tracts and was very widely read in its day. The depth of the thought in it was recognised by many clergymen and highly praised. "The types of Christ in the Old Testament are familiar, but Mr. Abramovitch has a way of expounding them that is particularly edifying," said one.¹¹⁷ It was one of Abramovitch's last works as evidenced by the list of his previous publications that was included in it (see photo below).



Source: Author

The work is clearly written with a Jewish audience in mind. It has the aim of showing that audience how to recognise the Messiah in their own scriptures. In the introductory chapter Mr Abramovitch stated that this had been made difficult by modern rabbis who have misrepresented the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead. He referred readers to the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord". The 'one' used here is the Hebrew word 'echad', signifying a unity or compound. He contrasted this to Maimonides creed of the twelfth century, "I believe with a perfect faith, that the creator, blessed be his name, is one". In this statement the 'one' is the Hebrew word 'yachid' meaning 'single' or 'only'. Abramovitch wrote that the word 'yachid' was never used to refer to God in the scriptures and was purposely used by Maimonides as a reaction against Christian claims that the Messiah and God could share the same identity.

Mr Abramovitch then listed many scriptures where the grammar referring to God is in plural form and many examples of how various Jewish authorities have sought to explain these away. He listed many scriptures where the word 'yachid' was used in the scriptures meaning 'solitary one' for example in Genesis 22:1 where God refers to

Abraham's son as his 'one and only' Son. Then he listed many scriptures where 'echad' is used to signify a compound unity such as morning and evening – one day (Gen 2:24). Finally, he showed from ancient Jewish writings, such as the Zohar, that ancient sages recognised that there was a compound unity of the Godhead although they did not understand the precise nature of it.

Referring to the Shema, Mr Abramovitch went on to show that the second person of the godhead (Jesus) is Jehovah (Adonai) and that he is Jehovah Tzidkenu, the Lord our righteousness and that this was understood by the ancient rabbis.

Mr Abramovitch concluded Chapter 1 with examples in which God identifies himself, in human form, as the Messiah such as in Zechariah 12:10 where God says, "I will pour out upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a spirit of Grace and supplication and they shall look upon **me** whom they have pierced and shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only son".

In Chapter 2 Mr Abramovitch reported on how he came to the conclusion that Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20) was an incarnation of the Messiah. He believed this firstly because Melchizedek was the Righteous King and the King of Peace – names applied to the Messiah. Secondly because he was a priest of the Lord most high before there were Levites and before the Aronic priesthood.

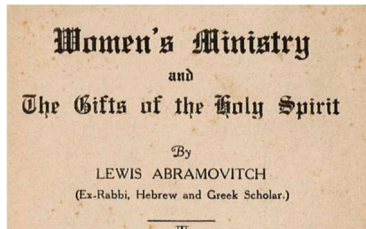
In Chapter 3 Mr Abramovitch discusses various appearances of Jehovah in human form – the one who saw Hagar (Gen 16:9-11); the one who appeared to Abraham when he was ninety-nine (Gen 17:1-8 and 13-22) and came to his tent with two other angelic beings (Gen 18:1-25); the one who called to Abraham from heaven saying not to kill Isaac; the one who appeared to Jacob at Peniel (Gen 32: 24-30); the one who spoke to Gideon (Judges 6);

Mr Abramovitch dedicated the whole of Chapter 4 to discussing the man who appeared to Joshua before the attack on Jericho (Joshua 5:14). He showed that the man is the same one who appeared in Joshua 6 and promised Joshua victory in Canaan (Joshua 1:1-9). He also showed that the man is the one that appeared to Jacob at Peniel and that he was, in fact, Jehovah incarnate and was the one promised in Exodus 23:20-23, "Behold I send an Angel before thee..." That Joshua worshipped him is further proof that he was Jehovah. Mr Abramovitch then shows how it is that he is called an angel and how some ancient rabbis writing on these verses recognised that the Angel was Jehovah. He also mentions that the prophet Isaiah saw Jehovah (Isaiah 6), and also the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 1:8) and that Radak¹¹⁸ recognised that these were appearances of Jehovah. Finally, Job (job 42:5-6) also saw the Lord.

Women's Ministry and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Women's Ministry and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit was published by the Keswick Depot in Melbourne.¹¹⁹ The year of publication is not included in it however it was probably quite late in his life and is not referred to in the previous list of his publications. This is a surprising addition to his library of works as there is nothing of relevance to his ministry in it. It does however, showcase his abilities with biblical Greek.

In this short booklet Mr Abramovitch addressed two passages which are used as justifications for not allowing women to pray, teach or preach in churches. These passages are I. Cor. 14:34, in which the Apostle Paul says: “Let women keep silence in the churches.” Also, I Tim. 2:12 where Paul writes: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”



Mr Abramovitch argued that there are sufficient examples in the scriptures to show that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are equally bestowed on men and women and that these gifts were exercised in public by both in the scriptures. He showed that use of the masculine form of Greek when referring to gifts of the Holy Spirit was a function of language and not a justification to exclude women. He

then showed that I. Cor. 14: 34-35, was not about prophesying and teaching but more about order when asking questions. He showed that the 1 Tim. 2:12 referred to women in their domestic setting and that it had nothing to do with church. Finally, he gave many examples of women throughout the scriptures and in the modern-day settings who had very fruitful ministries before quoting Psalm 68:11 and concluding, “Thanks be unto God for the multitude of His women Heralds of the Cross and Salvation by grace, through faith.”

Christmas and its Old Testament Meaning

Mr Abramovitch published a work called *Christmas and its Old Testament meaning*. This was nine pages and was based on an address to the Hebrew Christian Alliance in Sydney on 22nd December 1929¹²⁰. The address was advertised with the title *The Message of Christmas to the Jews*. Nothing further is known of this work.

The Jewish Feast of the Passover

The Jewish Feast of the Passover was published in the 1920s in Melbourne. It was a booklet of 16 pages and we no longer have access to any copy. Mr Abramovitch spoke frequently on the topic and some descriptions of these lectures survived in newspaper articles. The first of these was from a Passover demonstration at YMCA in April 1892.¹²¹ Another was from Prahran in April 1898¹²² These articles are reproduced in the companion volume of this work.

In these lectures Mr Abramovitch explained the differences between how the Passover was observed in the second temple period and how it was observed in modern times. One main point was that, in the second temple period the Jews had the Passover lamb. Now they have only a shank bone on the table to represent the Passover lamb, in memoriam. Now the Jews observe ‘the feast of unleavened bread’, but not ‘the feast of the Passover’. He stated that the reason is quite plain – because lamb typifying the Messiah had to give way, because “Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us.”

Another point was regarding the three “Passover cakes”, which form part of the ceremonial foods. Now they are said to represent the triple character of the chosen race, viz., Priests, Levites, and Israelites. However, in the second temple period Abramovitch did not doubt that they represented the Triune Character of the Redeemer of Israel from Egypt, because firstly, in those days the Jews believed in the Holy Trinity, and

secondly, because of how the middle Passover cake, which represents the second person of the Godhead, is (and was in those days) broken in half at the commencement of the feast. Half was eaten at the beginning, and the other half at the very end of the feast. This reminds us of Jesus, who is the second person of the Holy Trinity. Because at the commencement of the Gospel feast which He ushered in, He gave His body to feast upon and to entitle every saved sinner to partake of His glory, and to share all blessing with Him when He will appear a second time without being a sin offering, unto salvation.

An Open Letter to a Rabbi

In 1960 the American Board of Missions to the Jews, Incorporated (ABMJ) republished Mr Abramovitch's work *An Open Letter to a Rabbi*.¹²³ During the 1930s and 1940s the ABMJ was the largest Christian mission in America evangelising to Jewish people. In 1984, the organization changed its name to Chosen People Ministries (CPM) and continues to operate today.¹²⁴ To date enquiries about this booklet have not brought a copy to light.

The meaning of the Jewish Holy Days

Another work by Mr Abramovitch, *The Meaning of the Jewish Holy Days*, was published in the United States by Sar Shalom. Unfortunately there are no further details about this booklet or this organisation.

Other 'Lost' Publications

Other publications by Abramovitch, of which we no longer have any record, were *The Feast of Tabernacles*, *The Messiah has come, and has been Identified*, *Mr. Bert Hinkler* and *Moses, Emancipator and Teacher*.

It is likely that the booklet *Mr Bert Hinkler* was written around the time that the famous aviator was in Sydney on 9th – 10th March 1928 en route to Canberra, and then for sixteen days on a return flight to Bundaberg from 22nd May 1928.

Regarding *Moses, Emancipator and Teacher*, this was most likely published in the 1920s as it is listed with other booklets from this period on the cover of *The Lord Messiah: Who He Is, and how He Appeared to Old Testament Saints*. This booklet does not appear to have survived. We do, however, have some clues as to its content from two lectures Abramovitch presented in West Maitland in January 1891. In these he is reported to have started from Moses's prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15-19, that "from among you will arise a prophet like unto me". He then described Moses's life and proceeded to cite first passages of Scripture which had been always interpreted by the Jewish rabbis in such a way as to give abundant indirect support to the claims of Jesus, the Son of Joseph and Mary, to be the promised Messiah; and secondly forty points in which a similarity was discoverable either in a literal or in a spiritual sense, between the career, history, authority, powers, and deeds of Moses and of Christ. He contrasted this with descriptions of false Messiahs that had been followed by Jewish people at various times. These reports are reproduced in the companion volume of this work.¹²⁵

Lectures and Addresses

The following is a table of public lectures and addresses given by Lewis Abramovitch in his roles as missionary to the Jews. The information is presented in chronological order and was compiled from newspaper advertisements and articles, many of which have been reproduced in the companion volume to this book. The list excludes weekly sermons given while he was undertaking pastoral duties in various churches.

JUNE 1888 - JULY 1891

Date	Location	Topic
1889, 19 February	Parramatta (All Saints)	The Persecution of the Jews in Russia
1889, 14 August	Bathurst (Anglican)	The Jewish Day of Atonement as observed before and after the Christian Era
1889, 31 September	Pymont (Centenary Congregational)	The Tabernacle of Israel (part 1)
1889, 1 October	Pymont	The Tabernacle of Israel (part 2)
1889, 30 December	Pyree	The Jewish Passover
1890, 2 January	Nowra (Presbyterian)	
1890, 3 January	Cambewarra (Union)	The Jewish Passover
1890, 8 January	Nowra (Anglican)	Jewish Missions
1890, 13 January	Sydney (YMCA)	The Messiahs of Israel and Israel's Messiah
1890, 26 April	Melbourne (YMCA)	The Jews In Relation to the Old Covenant of God with His Church
1890, 29 April	Melbourne (YMCA)	The Jews In Relation to the New covenant of God with His Church
1890, 30 April	Melbourne (YMCA)	The Jews In Relation to the Past
1890, 1 May	Melbourne (YMCA)	The Jews In Relation to the Present
1890, 2 May	Melbourne (YMCA)	The Jews in Relation to the Future
1890, 20 May	Melbourne (YMCA)	The True Messiah of Israel
1890, 21 June	Sydney (YMCA)	The Biblical Account of the Flood
1890, 26 July	Surry Hills (Anglican)	Topic not reported
1890, 19 August	Sydney (YMCA)	The Crucifixion of Christ proved to be unlawful according to the authority of the Jews
1890, 16 September	Sydney (YMCA)	Genealogies of Jesus of Nazareth
1890, 27 September	Sydney (YMCA)	Israel's Day of Atonement in the Temple and the Synagogue
1890, 28 September	Sydney (YMCA)	Genealogy of Jesus Christ, proved to be without discrepancies
1890, 19 October	Nowra (Anglican)	Topic not reported
1890, 21 October	Nowra	Topic not reported – British and Foreign Bible Society Annual General Meeting
1890, 30 October	Nowra (Anglican)	The Christian Church in its relationship to the Jews
1890, 4 November	Nowra (Anglican School)	The Jews as related to Christianity
1890, 23 December	Windsor (Anglican)	Jewish Missions Throughout the World
1891, 12 January	Newcastle (YMCA)	The Crucifixion of Christ with Proofs of His Messiahship
1891, 13 January	Newcastle (Anglican)	The False Messiahs of Israel
1891 14 January	Newcastle (Anglican)	Forty Identifications of the True Messiah of the Jews
1891, 19 January	W Maitland (Anglican)	The False Messiahs of Israel

1891, 20 January	W Maitland	Forty Identifications of the True Messiah of the Jews
1891, 22 January	W Maitland	The Day of Atonement
1891, 23 January	W Maitland (Anglican)	The Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth
1891, 1 June	Brisbane (YMCA)	Russia and the Jews
1891, 3 June	Brisbane (YMCA)	Jewish Messiahs and the Messiah of the Jews
1891, 4 June	Brisbane (YMCA)	The Genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth
1891 3&4 June	Brisbane (YMCA)	The Jew in Relation to the World and the Church
1891, 20 June	Fortitude Valley (Anglican)	Topic Not Reported
1891, 21 June	Brisbane (Anglican)	The Relation of the Jews to the Christian Church
1891, 23 June	Brisbane (Protestant)	Why I am a Christian, or a Comparison and a Contrast
1891, 24 June	Brisbane (YMCA)	The Crucifixion, or, Ought the Jews to be (directly) accused of the Crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth
1891, 25 June	Brisbane (YMCA)	The Deluge
1891, 27 June	Brisbane (YMCA)	How I became a Christian or A very Interesting Narrative (farewell address)
1891, 28 June	Brisbane (Anglican)	Isaiah 43: 8-10

DECEMBER 1891 – AUGUST 1894

1891, 25 December	Nowra (Anglican)	Topic not Reported
1892, 15 January	Nowra	Russia and the Jews
1892, 26 March	Sydney (YMCA)	Is the Biblical Account of the Fall of Man a Myth?
1892, 2 April	Sydney (YMCA)	The Deluge of Noah, Not a Myth but a Fact
1892, 12 April	Sydney (YMCA)	The Passover

SEPTEMBER 1894 – JULY 1903

1894, 25 September	Melbourne (YMCA)	The Present Condition of the Jews
1894, 13 November	Melbourne (YMCA)	Lost Israel Found
1895, 27 January	Malvern, (Congregnl)	Important Information about the Jews
1895, 10 March	St Kilda (Baptist)	Topic Not Reported
1895, 16 March	Pt Melbourne (Seamens)	Topic Not Reported
1895, 28 May	St Kilda, (Alfred Hall)	Israel, the Greatest Marvel in the History of Nations
1895, 11 June	St Kilda (Alfred Hall)	Israel, their Perogative and Glory
1895, 27 November	St Kilda (Baptist)	Mission Work Among Jews in Sydney and Melbourne
1896, 13 February	Melbourne (YMCA)	Modern Religious Status of the Jews
1896, 20 February	Melbourne (YMCA)	The Miraculous Nation
1896, 10 June	Brighton (Baptist)	The Day of Atonement
1896, 21 July	Melbourne (YMCA)	Topic not Reported
1897, 3 January	Vic. Park (Cong)	Topic not Reported
1897, 10 January	Vic. Park (Cong)	Topic not Reported
1897, 28 February	Vic. Park (Cong)	Topic not Reported
1898, 29 April	Prahran (Hall)	The Jewish Passover and The Lord's Supper
1898, 2 May	Melbourne (YMCA)	Friends of Israel Monthly Meeting
1898, 2 June	Bendigo (Methodist)	The Jewish Passover
1898, 13 June	Mt Alexander	Religious Rites and Ceremonies of the Jews
1898, 16 June	Bendigo (Cong)	90 Years Jewish Missions
1898, 18 August	Ballarat (City Hall)	Israel's mission to the World
1898, 19 August	Ballarat (City Hall)	Credibility of the NT from a Jewish Standpoint

1898, 23 August	Ballarat (Scotts Church)	Work of the Israel Association
1898, 26 August	Ballarat (Wesleyan)	The Ancient Jewish Passover
1898, 4 September	Ballarat (Scotts Church)	Israel, the Greatest Phenomenon in History
1898, 7 September	Ballarat (Baptist)	The Jewish Day of Atonement pre and post CE
1898, 9 September	Ballarat (MU Hall)	The “British Israel” question
1898, 2 October	Bendigo (Wesleyan)	Is. 62: 6-7 I have set watchmen...
1898, 23 October	Launceston (Chalmers)	Mission to the Jews
1898 30 October	Launceston (Presbyterian)	Israel’s Influence on the Nations of the World
1898, 30 October	Launceston (Tabernacle)	Mission to the Jews
1898, 4 November	Launceston (Chalmers)	The Jewish Day of Atonement pre and post CE
1898, 6 November	Launceston (Memorial)	The Jews in Relation to our Lord’s Second Coming
1898, 10 November	Launceston (Memorial)	The Jewish Passover and the Lord’s Passover
1898, 11 November	Launceston (inter-den)	Mission to the Jews
1898, 18 November	Hobart (YMCA)	Bible Reading by Jewish Missionary
1898, 20 November	Hobart (Presbyterian)	
1898, 23 November	Hobart (Presbyterian)	Jewish Atonement Past and Present
1898, 28 November	Hobart (YMCA)	The Story of Queen Esther Repeated
1898, 23 November	Hobart (Anglican)	The Jewish Atonement Past and Present
1898, 29 November	Hobart (Mechanics Ins)	The Jewish Passover and the Lord’s Supper
1898, 30 November	Hobart (Town Hall)	The Unique Origin, History and Destiny of Israel
1898, 1 December	Hobart (Memorial Hall)	Australian Mission to the Jews
1898, 2 December	New Town (Wesleyan)	Condition and Attitude of Jews Toward Christianity
1898, 4 December	Hobart (Wesleyan)	Topic not reported
1898, 11 December	Launceston (Wesleyan)	Topic not reported
1898, 14 December	Launceston (Mechanics)	The Unique Origin, History and Destiny of Israel
1899, 15 January	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	Justice and Mercy – God’s Perogative
1899, 15 January	Zeehan Presbyterian)	The Jew – An Unanswerable Argument
1899, 22 January	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	The Holy Catholic Church
1899, 22 January	Zeehan (Prebyterian)	Israel, the greatest influence on the Nations
1899, 29 January	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	Life, Its origin and its Nature
1899, 1 February	Zeehan (Wesleyan)	The Jewish Passover before and after the CE
1899, 5 February	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	The Unique Origin, History and Destiny of Israel
1899, 5 February	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	Captain Dreyfus – or History Repeats Itself
1899, 9 February	Zeehan (Methodist)	The Religious Rites and Ceremonies of the Jews
1899, 12 February	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	Jesus Christ – the Human and the Devine
1899, 12 February	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	Light and one of its purposes in the World
1899, 19 February	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	The Earth and what it teacheth
1899, 19 February	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	Sermon in Stones (Children’s address)
1899, 19 February	Zeehan (Presbyterian)	An Answer to a Weighty Question
1899, 22 February	Zeehan	Address at the Bible Society Annual Meeting
1899, 26 February	Hobart (Presbyterian)	
1899, 3 March	Launceston (Mechanics)	Address to Meeting of Friends of Israel
1899, 5 May	Prahran (Town Hall)	British Israel
1899, 21 May	Sebastapol (Baptist)	The Secret of Israel’s Indestructability
1899, 21 May	Sebastapol (Baptist)	The Influence of Israel Upon the World
1899, 24 May	Ballarat (Scott’s Church)	The Jewish Passover
1899, 26 May	Ballarat	The Jews in Relation to History
1899, 20 June	Ballarat (Wesleyan)	Modern Missions to the Jews – A Phenomenon
1899, 21 June	Ballarat	Topic not reported
1899, 26 August	Melbourne (YMCA)	The Chosen People

1900, 6 October	Collingwood (Hall)	The Day of Atonement Before and After Christ
1900, 13 October	Collingwood (Hall)	Judah's Sceptre and Shiloh's coming
1900, 24 November	Adelaide	Topic not Reported
1900, 26-30 November	Adelaide (YMCA)	Various
1900, 6 December	Adelaide (Victoria Hall)	The Unique Origin, History and Destiny of Israel
1900, 9 December	West Adelaide (Methodi)	Topic not reported
1900, 9 December	Adelaide (Presbyterian)	Topic not reported
1900, 15 December	Adelaide (Victoria Hall)	Topic not reported
1900, 18 December	Adelaide (WCTU Hall)	Topic not reported
1900, 23 December	Goodwood	Topic not reported
1901, 18 January	Adelaide (Victoria Hall)	The credibility of the NT from a Jewish standpoint
1901, 19 January	Port Adelaide (Wesleyan)	British Israelism
1901, 20 January	Port Adelaide (Pres)	Christian Citizenship
1901, 25 January	Adelaide (YMCA)	Topic not reported
1901, 26 January	Adelaide (Baptist)	Present Attitude of the Jews Toward Christianity
1901, 27 January	Southwark (Baptist)	Topic not reported
1901, 6 April	Goodwood (Presbyterian)	Topic not reported
1901, 18 April	Port Augusta (Presb)	Mission to the Jews
1901, 30 April	Petersburg (Baptist)	The Present Attitude of the Jews Toward Christianity
1901, 29 April	Kadina (Methodist)	Topic not reported
1901, 16 June	Petersburg (Presbyterian)	Topic not reported
1901, 18 June	Laura (Methodist)	Topic not reported
1901, 2 July	Adelaide	Why I believe in the New Testament
1901, 9 October	Melbourne	The Holy Spirit, Indwelling Guide, Comforter...
1901, 20 October	Collingswood (Hall)	All Creation's Deliverance
1901, 9 November	Fitzroy	Is the NT antagonistic to the old?
1903, 26 July	Sydney (YMCA)	Topic not reported

OCTOBER 1927- APRIL 1932

1927, 6 October	Sydney (Heb Christian)	Israel's claim upon the church
1927, 13 November	Boolaroo (Baptist)	Topic not reported
1928, 29 February	Southerland (Anglican)	Topic not reported
1928, 1 March	Miranda (Anglican)	Topic not reported
1928, 13 May	Miranda (Anglican)	Topic not reported
1929, 10 June	Sydney (School of Arts)	What think Ye of Christ? For the NSW Mission
1929, 16 June	Como (Anglican)	Topic not reported
1929, 24 June	Sydney (School of Arts)	The Lord Messiah and his Appearances to OT saints
1929, 1 July	Sydney (School of Arts)	The Crucifixion of the Messiah
1929, 10 September	West Melbourne (Bapt)	The Wonderful Story of God's own People
1929, 18 September	Williamstown	Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God
1929, 30 November	Sydney (IHCA)	Alliance Meeting
1929, 22 December	Sydney	The Message of Christmas to the Jews
1930, 25 January	Sydney (HCAA)	Alliance meeting
1930, 15 March	Sydney	The book of Esther
1930, 5 April	Sydney	Vayikra
1930, 10 May	Sydney	The day of Atonement
1930, 17 May	Sydney	The Tabernacle

1930, 29 June	Sydney (School of Arts)	The Lord Messiah
1930, 12 July	Sydney (YMCA)	Abraham, the Friend of God
1930, 23 August	Sydney (YMCA)	Messiah is Coming
1930, 24 August	Kiama	Various
1930, 4 October	Sydney (YMCA)	The Last day of the Feast
1931, 31 January	Hobart (Congregational)	The Jews Claim upon the Church
1931, 12 February	Launceston	Were the Jews Responsible for the Crucifixion of Christ
1931, 15 February	Launceston (C of C)	Topic not recorded
1931, 6 June	Carlton	Israel in the Wilderness
1931, 17 October	Carlton	Joseph, a Type of Messiah
1931, 21 October	Carlton	The Jews, the Gentiles, The Christians, what Has Happened and is About to Happen
1932, 27 February	Carlton	David, King of Israel
1932, 9 April	Williamstown	The Passover

About the Author

At the time of writing Catherine Wright lives with her husband Stephen in Springfield on the NSW Central Coast. She is a member of the Terrigal Uniting Church and has been involved with various organisations of the Messianic Jewish movement over the past 40 years, including as a member of several Messianic Jewish fellowships and the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia.

After leaving school Catherine completed an undergraduate degree at Macquarie University and two years of theological studies Moore Theological College. Before retiring in 2011 she had a career in administration at the ABC and at two universities.

Catherine now enjoys ocean swimming, Israeli dancing, and gardening on her property. She also enjoys researching and writing biographical articles about her family. In 2002 she published her uncle's memoir titled *From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo and Beyond: Memoirs of a Tin Can Sailor by Eugene McClarty*.

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- ⁵ Anglican Parish Register, Sts Simon and Jude, Surry Hills Campbell Street, 13 September 1889 - 28 December 1903 in Anglican Parish Registers, 1814-2011 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2017.
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- ⁹ Private correspondence with family (email of 3 August 2022 from great grand daughter Michelle Honan)
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¹²⁴ Interestingly, there are many parallels between the life of the founder of CPM, Leopold Cohn, and
Abramovitch. They were contemporaneous, Cohn having been born in 1862 in Hungary and dying in the
United States in 1937. Both were converted after arriving in new countries and both spent their lives

working as missionaries to the Jews. Both were well read in rabbinical literature and after their conversions to Christianity, had a good knowledge of Christian theology. Cohn claimed to have been ordained as a rabbi at the age of 18 and there was speculation that Abramovitch was an ex-rabbi. For more information about Leopold Cohn see Ariel (2000). *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880 - 2000*. H. Eugene and Lillian Youngs Lehman Series. The University of North Carolina Press, p. 101

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