

Johannes Rottenberg was born in 1888 in a town in Galicia, the son of a Jewish Hasidic Rabbi, the sect or "court" was a spiritual movement - seeking the magnificent within the mundane, about a century prior to then.



Zamek w Dąbrowie - Drzeworyt według rysunku Czylińskiego,
Tygodnik Ilustrowany 1866 ze zbiorów Biblioteki Instytutu
Badań Literackich PAN
Ilustracja 6 z 6

Castle ruins in Dąbrowa

SYNAGOGA UL. BERKA JOSELEWICZA In Dąbrowa



https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/dabrowa_tarnowska/

He was sent to Basel, Switzerland to study with a famous rabbi. Rabbi Arthur Cohn had facilitated the first Zionist Congress, as he expressed his hope that "national Judaism would be the gateway to religious Judaism."



"Visionary of the Jewish State" T. Herzl at the 1st Zionist Conference in Basel in 1897.



Perhaps Rottenberg wasn't there yet in 1897, but he arrived between then and 1911 – a period when there were several important Zionist Congresses. The Rabbi soon realized compatibility between Zionism and religious Judaism was no longer certain.

When he met Christians proselytizing to Jews, he heard Millenarian theology originally from Germany which spoke of a mass conversion of Jewish people and the second coming of Christ to restore a "paradisiacal state" to the world.



Judenmission in Basel in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts

Ein Forschungsbericht

von

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Einleitung: Zu Forschungslage und Fragestellung

Die evangelische Judenmission ist Teil der grossen Missionsbewegungen des 19. Jahrhunderts, welche nach der Französischen Revolution von England aus einerseits die Industrialisierung Mitteleuropas, andererseits die Kolonialisierung der aussereuropäischen Länder begleiteten. Die Judenmission stiess während des 19. Jahrhunderts nie auf das breite Interesse, welches der sogenannten «Heidenmission» auch von Menschen entgegengebracht wurde, welche der Mission an sich eher distanziert gegenüberstanden. Die marginale Stellung innerhalb der Missionsbewegung, der geringe Erfolg und das fehlende Prestige der evangelischen Judenmission sollten aber nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, dass die religiösen Grundkonzepte der evangelischen Judenmission der ganzen evangelischen Missionsbewegung gemeinsam waren.

The Baslers formed a solid relationship with the major Dutch and British mission societies - which were also controversially premillennialist. After a long search and wandering, thinking about God...

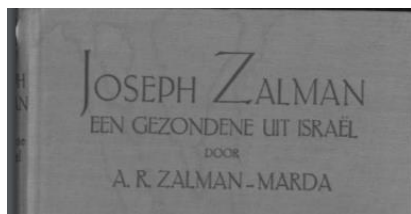


I'll say it was a journey! 800 miles through the heart of a consolidated Germany that was developing technological strength. Rottenberg perhaps stopped at places where German pietism and premillennial outreach originated – as did philosophical liberalism.

His long journey ended at The Association for Missions under Israel, called Elim, in Rotterdam. It was led by J. Zalmann, a former Rabbi who'd converted to Christ. Destitute Jews emigrating to America arrived at Elim, where they received the Gospel in addition to food and clothing. Some of them accepted Christ!



Johannes Rottenberg at Elim mission, probably after he was baptized at a Reformed church (since he doesn't appear Hasidic at this time).



Translated from this [biography](#):

One day Missionary Zalmann called me into his house office. He had a letter for me, and already I recognized my father's handwriting. No wonder I nervously devoured the contents. My father had heard that I was going astray, and was even in the house of a "renegade." The letter made warnings and threats. I immediately replied that he should not worry, I would not do anything or be persuaded into any conviction unless fully assured of the truth. I earnestly examined the Scriptures ...

One [biography](#) said, “Rottenberg was one of the most gifted and important theologians of Jewish descent in the Netherlands. He was rooted in the Talmud and in the Jewish tradition and had a solid knowledge of the rabbinic commentaries on the Bible. Therefore, he was able to discuss the Messiah with rabbis on an equal level.” He’d now also studied the New Testament.

He was quite astute when he likely saw the impending storm coming to Europe. He boarded the S.S. Noordam and arrived at Ellis Island, N.Y. on July 14, 1914. The Great War began two weeks later.



Rottenberg probably had his destination already in mind. The next stage of his spiritual and literal journey continued to develop his interest in Zionism. He would now seek the Chicago Hebrew Mission and its founder, W. E. Blackstone – sometimes called the father of Christian Zionism. In 1891 Blackstone had played a leading part in crafting a petition for the rebuilding of a new Jewish state in the holy land, Palestine. <https://fromthevault.wheaton.edu/2020/07/01/to-show-kindness-to-israel-william-blackstones-memorial/>

It’s possible he may have heard of J. I. Fles, a minister with a Dutch Jewish background whose CRC denomination supported the Chicago Hebrew Mission. The CRC Jewish mission was [closely following](#) Elim’s work before the war. Fles held similar premillennial beliefs.

From “The Jewish Era” in [American Messianic Fellowship, 1915](#) (It also mentioned the Pastor Dolbeck who had baptized Rottenberg. He published a missionary magazine in German titled “Zion’s Friend”)

MR. W. E. BLACKSTONE AT THE ZIONIST CONGRESS.

At the great convention of Zionists held in Philadelphia last July our beloved vice-president, Mr. W. E. Blackstone, had the opportunity of addressing those assembled. The chairman, in introducing Mr. Blackstone to an eager audience, spoke of him as “the greatest and best ally Zionism has outside its own camp,” and the people listened in the profoundest silence to the message from the lips of our brother.

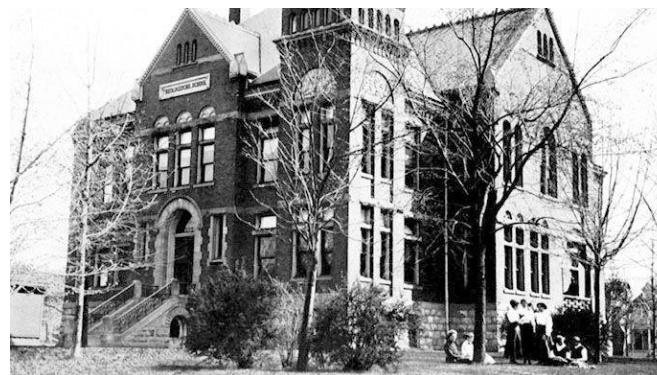
Mr John **Rottenberg**, who has been assisting us during the summer at our Halsted Street Reading Room, takes charge of the West Division Branch and already the Lord seems to be blessing his efforts.



On July 29, 1915, Cornelia Boender arrived on the S.S. Noordam to Ellis Island. At age 21 she married John Rottenberg in Lansing, Illinois where they'd both lived. She was from the Dutch Christian Reformed church, and they had four girls in the next four years.



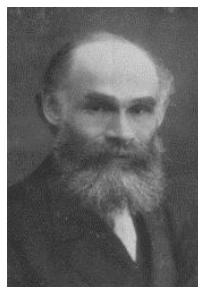
Rottenberg continued his studies at Moody Bible Institute, elsewhere in Chicago, and he went to the CRC's seminary in Grand Rapids, MI, in 1917 and graduated in 1920.



During this period (after the [Balfour Declaration](#) declared in favor of a Zionist state), the CRC Synod decided to end their support for the "interdenominational" Chicago Hebrew Mission and to begin a different "ecclesiastical and confessional" Chicago Jewish Mission "of our own Church." They were probably concerned that Blackstone's premillennial eschatology did not conform to their amillennialist view of the end times. Rottenberg then worked at and in 1922 he led the denomination's new mission there. The work is difficult and discouraging.

Receipts from June 1, 1920, to June 1, 1922: General Fund	
and from individual congregations and persons	\$21,798.59
Disbursements from June 1, 1920 to June 1, 1922	<u>18,463.15</u>
Balance	\$ 3,335.44

In 1924 Rottenberg and family move to London, and he worked at the Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel mission, led by Messianic Jews, [David Baron](#) and Dr. Schönberger. His first son Isaac was born, and they named another son after Baron. Rottenberg would write this [obituary](#) of Baron.



Rottenberg is called back to Rotterdam to lead the [Elim Mission](#) in 1929. He continues his work passionately, with speaking engagements throughout the country. He gives baptismal instruction, and leads home circles. A “remarkable” number of Jews turned up for his “dialogues.”



Van links naar rechts - Zending Ph. Troostonitzky, Dr. J. H. Geulle, Dr. J. Rottenberg, Dr. C. M. Blankhaar, Dr. W. ten Boom, Dr. W. J. de Wilde, Dr. D. A. v. d. Bosch

The seven speakers of the first annual Jewish conference in 1930. Rottenberg is third from the left. Third from the right is Rev. Wim ten Boom, the brother of Corrie ten Boom, he wrote “The awakening of the Jewish people.” The “Federation of Dutch Missionary Societies Working Among the Jews” began in 1935.

The mission receives donations from Christian congregations, such as that of Rev. D.A. van den Bosch, Reformed minister in The Hague (on the right of picture.) He was a member of a “Confessional Association” (translated), which had been opposed to Reformed Church liberalism and modernism since the 1860s. Rev. van den Bosch is concerned for the Jewish people, based on his (premillennial) “expectations for Israel.” He was arrested in 1940, and then sent to Camp Amersfoort in 1941. He clandestinely preached from Daniel 6 to other prisoners. On March 20, he took his last breath, aged 57.

<https://twnews.nl/nl-news/ds-dirk-arie-van-den-bosch-bloedgetuige-in-kamp-amersfoort>



The Rottenberg family moved to Scheveningen so he can preach in the Hague, especially in 1940-41. He publishes a missionary magazine, and writes several books in the thirties. Rottenberg traveled through Germany and Poland in 1935. He wrote against Nazis. "Christians must endure such persecution," he wrote. They had already gone back to the Chicago area to visit Cornelia's family. He is asked to return to Chicago and translate the New Testament into Yiddish. He had planned to do so. But then in January 1942 ...



1931. "The pastor of the Second ~~xxxxx~~ Church (in New York) wants to destroy our Jewish faith. The Jewish God is a thorn in his side... We Jews are besieged."

The [Battle of Rotterdam](#) began on May 10th, 1940. In January 1942, Rev. Rottenberg was arrested and taken to Amersfoort concentration camp. He would not stop praying with the other prisoners. In June 1942, John Rottenberg died at 62 years of age in the brutal labor camp in Mauthausen, Austria.



Other members of the Rottenberg family (not sure who), and workers from the Elim Mission were imprisoned, e.g. S. P. Tabaksblatt was deported to Theresiënstadt in 1944 (per the Dutch [Hadderech](#)). He survived. He was confirmed in 1953 as a minister in Bethlehem Church in The Hague. That year he said Herzl's Zionist ideal had become a reality. Isaac Rottenberg would later marry his daughter, and then follow in his father John's footsteps.



And now? A recent story told of an attack during Hanukkah on Hasidic Rabbi Chaim Rottenberg (not sure if he's related). It ends; "While Rabbi Rottenberg is calling for healing, security is still a concern. There is a state trooper posted in front of the synagogue next door to his home as well as other temples in the area. And that will be the case for the unforeseeable future."

This is how I like to remember, to know how Rev. Rottenberg saw the future of his people. [Israel's Herstel](#) (Restoration) cited the 3rd chapter of Hosea and Romans 11 to say in Dutch, "... And when that glorious time of the Messianic Kingdom of Peace [Shalom] comes, when the believing Gentiles are grafted in, and the believing Jews are grafted in again into that olive tree, then it will be one Church of the living God, one people Israel through faith in Jesus Christ, and then with common rights to the promises; not only of Palestine, but also of the inheritance of the whole earth." (Per Mrs. A.R. Zalman-Marda)

