



The International Jewish – Christian Bible Week, Germany

01.11.2018 | Notre Dame de Sion (NDS)

I had heard from Srs. Clare, Margaret and Kathy, NDS about the International Jewish Christian Bible Week for a number of years and they had given me the impression that it was a programme that marks memory for a long time. Finally, this year, I was able to take part in it, as well as sr. Kathy.

The Jewish – Christian Bible Week takes place in Germany (in recent years in Haus Ohrbeck near Osnabrück) for 50 years. Jews and Christians from Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, the USA, Israel and other countries, scholars and interested lay people (this year 130 participants), came together at the Jewish-Christian Bible Week to study biblical texts against a background of the two traditions.

Every morning study groups take place, where Jews and Christians have an opportunity to study, discuss and share their knowledge concerning chosen biblical text, this year Genesis 1-3, Isaiah 42-49 and Jonah. Groups are formed according to knowledge of Hebrew and focus. In-depths study of the Hebrew text, canonical approach, Jewish – Christian Bible study, biblical text and the contemporary world, interpretation and creative response through visual art. Trust and an openness to listen to and to ask questions was deeply touching. This made me realise the gigantic changes that has happened in Jewish – Christian relations since the Nostra Aetate document. In the afternoons, four lecturers: Dr. D. Kahn – Harris (Rabbi and a Jewish Bible Scholar), Prof. Halima Krausen (a Muslim Sheika and imam), Fr. Dr C. Rutishauser (a Jesuit, and a Bible Scholar) and H. Copper (a Rabbi and a psychoanalyst) delivered brilliant and often challenging presentations of studied biblical texts.

The shift in our mutual relations was also very visible during the moments of prayer. Each morning Christians were invited to come to Shacharit (Jewish morning prayer). Before each study session there was a common recitation of a Psalm, first read in Hebrew and then in various languages. In the evenings Christians opened the door for everybody who wanted to listen to Christian liturgical prayer – Compline (a night prayer). Finally, at the end of the week everybody had a chance to experience Jewish Shabbat with its services (Kabbalat Shabbat, Shacharit and Havdalah) as well as Christian: on Saturday Vespers led by a Lutheran and on Sunday a Catholic Mass. An excellent interfaith choir was formed, often accompanied by professional musicians. Additionally, this year Rebekka Wedell, a composer, singer and pianist, composed for us a beautiful piece of music for the occasion of the Jubilee of the Bible Week.

This 50th year of the International Jewish – Christian Bible week was marked by the anniversary celebration during which one of the founders, Rabbi Dr. J. Magonet presented a talk 'A Journey through Time 1969 – 2018' when he picked up all the changes that had happened over the last fifty years. During the Kaleidoscope Rabbi M. Solomon spoke about the central place of Hebrew Scriptures during the Bible week, E. Sommer talked about studying the text with all one's senses (through art, music etc), A. Boeckler and E. Hadem talked about worshipping in the presence of the Other, rabbi J. Baden about translations (as everything is in both languages: English and German). Finally U. Silber talked about the learning process that happens during the Bible week. Each of the presenters focused on the development and changes that had occurred from the

beginning until today.

What also make this week very special are the friendships that are formed over this time. The inter-personal dialogues, conversations that take place in between the sessions and over the meals, are done in an atmosphere of trust and respect. This facilitates learning about the tradition of each one in a very informal but a deep way. The deceased participants from the previous years were remembered in the prayers (a few sisters of Zion were mentioned). Those who could not come had letters sent to them. This is how the Jewish – Christian Bible Week takes us beyond time and space and hopefully makes a difference (even if it is only tiny) so needed today in contemporary society.

Sr. Kasia, NDS

Source: [Notre Dame de Zion](#).