

# Inventory of the Baptist Convention in Israel Collection

AR 969



Rev. Dwight Baker in pulpit at Nazareth Baptist Church, ca. 1954

Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives

October 2018

# Inventory of the

## Baptist Convention in Israel Collection

### AR 969

#### **Summary**

Main Entry: Baptist Convention in Israel Collection

Date Span: 1954-1992

Abstract:

Size: 3 linear ft. (2 record center boxes)

Collection #: AR 969

#### **Historical Sketch**

Baptist ministry in the Palestine and Israel started in 1911 and was adopted in 1923 by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which supported the work and ministry until 1991. Since then, the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel (ABC) serves as the umbrella organization for Baptist churches and ministries throughout the Holy Land.

In 1909, Shukri Mosa, a young Arab man, decided to leave Palestine to explore the possibility of a new life in the United States of America. He settled upon Texas as his new home, where he would travel from one farm to another, selling souvenirs from the Holy Land. One day, he visited a man called Rev. Dr. Lee Scarborough, one of the best known Baptist scholars and teachers of the era. Mosa was converted to Christianity and was baptized in 1910 by the famous Southern Baptist minister George W. Truett, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas.

Only one year later in 1911, Mosa was sent back to Palestine with the support of Illinois Baptists as a missionary to his community in Safad. God blessed his work with an early convert. On May 10th, 1911, he baptized Louis Hanna in the stream known as Wadi Al Laymun. Later that year, Mosa moved to Nazareth. Nazareth proved more responsive than the people of Safad and he was able to found the first Baptist church in Palestine. In 1917, the Ottoman Empire came to an end and was replaced in Palestine by the British Mandate, which made the situation easier for the Arab Christians. Then, in 1922, the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention assumed the Baptist work that had already begun in Palestine and Lebanon (a part then of Syria), founding their 'Near East Mission'. This included already established Baptist churches in Nazareth, Beirut (founded in 1895), Rashia and Kufur Mishki (founded in 1899). In Palestine the first American missionaries were J. Wash Watts and F.B. Pearsons, who arrived in 1923 to find the work already well established by nationals like Mosa. In 1924, a generous gift was received from Mr. and Mrs. Bottoms of Texas, enabled the Baptists to buy a small parcel of

land near Mary's well in Nazareth, on which was opened in 1926 the first Baptist church building in Nazareth.

Mosa, the able preacher and a charismatic leader, died in 1928. Louis Hanna, took over as the pastor until 1937, actively supported by Mosa's widow Munira. The congregation in Nazareth grew to several hundred including a large Sunday school and women's ministry, and a 'home church' was planted in the nearby village of Cana. Baptist work grew elsewhere as well. Baptist missionaries began work in Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, mainly among the Jews that were immigrating in increasing numbers to Palestine. The Jerusalem Baptist building was erected in 1933. In 1936, the missionary Roswell Owens was able to plant a congregation in the important new city of Haifa.

Tensions with Muslims and Jews adversely influenced Baptist work. The faithful missionaries continued working among Jews and Arabs but travel between the two communities became increasingly dangerous. One missionary, Leo Eddleman, used the curfew to become fluent in both Arabic and Hebrew alongside his busy ministry as pastor at the Jerusalem Baptist Church and later in Nazareth. Then in 1941, the United States entered the World War and all of the American missionaries were forced to leave the country. This badly undermined the Baptist work, which depended on staff and funds from the Southern Baptists. Nazareth Baptist School, for example, had been established only in 1935 as a service to the Arab community but was forced to shut down in 1941. The Nazareth Baptists continued to hold services under local leadership, however.

The Baptist Church suffered badly from all these conflict in the area between Jews and Arabs and the establishment of the nation of Israel. The Southern Baptist missionary force was reduced to only five people when a new missionary pastor arrived from the United States in 1950. Dr. Dwight Baker said of that faithful little flock: "Had it not been for the stout-hearted courage of the nationals, all would have been lost. A work that was heroically begun by Arab Baptists was just as heroically sustained by these indefatigable souls". Under his ministry, the work was revived, souls were saved, people were renewed and the small Baptist community in Nazareth became a lively church again. The George W. Truett Orphanage had survived and the Nazareth Baptist School was reopened in 1948, producing its first graduating class in 1955.

This growth in the Baptist witness was given a national identity in 1965, when 'The Association of Baptist Churches in Israel' (ABC) was established with five churches. In 1945, a farm near the city of Petah Tikva in central Israel was purchased by the Baptists in order to establish a Jewish Christian farming community, but the scheme was not successful. In 1955 the George W. Truett Orphanage moved there from Nazareth and a vocational school was also established, the location now being known as 'The Baptist Village'. The Baptist Village eventually developed as a retreat and camp center to serve all believers, whether from Christian or Jewish backgrounds. Hundreds of young believers and their families have met with God through attending holiday camps there over the years. [Adapted from online history by Bader Mansour, Ex. Secretary of the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel]

### **Scope and Content Note**

The collection documents the work of the Baptist mission and church work in Palestine and Israel for the year 1954 to 1983. The majority of the files on the convention include a wealth of information on Southern Baptist activities in the country of Israel. The files usually include the following material: minutes of the Executive Committee and the convention meeting, proceedings of the annual meeting, correspondence, reports from committees, ministries and mission stations, resolutions, programs and agendas, financial information and budgets, clippings, personal reports, and general information on Baptist mission and church activities. Leaders in the mission and church work in Israel who are mentioned in the records include: Dwight and Emma Baker, Lee and Sarah Bividin, Chandler Lanier, Margaret and Robert Lindsey, Martha and Milton Murphey and Marjorie and Paul Rowden.

The collection also includes files of class notes, articles, and lecture material for classes taught by Baptist missionaries. A history of Baptist work in Palestine/Israel by Dwight Baker is also included in the collection.

### **Arrangement**

The collection is arranged in chronological order by the year. The original order of the collection was maintained and folder contents mostly unchanged.

### **Provenance**

Donated by Rebecca Rowden, September 5, 2017.

### **Preferred Citation**

Baptist Convention in Israel Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

### **Access Restrictions**

None

### **Subject Terms**

Association of Baptist Churches in Israel  
 Baptist Convention in Israel  
 Nazareth Baptist Church (Israel)  
 Petah Tikva (Baptist Village)  
 Baptists – Israel  
 Baptists – Missions – Israel  
 Baptists – Missions – Middle East  
 Baker, Dwight L.  
 Baker, Emma  
 Bividin, Lee  
 Bividin, Sarah  
 Lanier, Chandler  
 Lindsey, Robert Lisle  
 Lindsey, Margaret  
 Murphey, Martha

Murphey, Milton  
 Rowden, Marjorie  
 Rowden, Paul D.  
 Rowden, Rebecca, donor

### **Related Materials**

Baker, Dwight L. Collection. Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, AR 755.  
 Southern Baptist Convention. Foreign Mission Board. Mission Minutes and Materials. AR551-1.  
 Southern Baptist Convention. Missionary Correspondence Files, AR551-2  
     Murphey, Milton and Martha, 1952-1987. Box 222  
     Rowden, Paul and Marjorie, 1951-1962. Box 110  
     Thorne, Dale and Anita, 1965-1987. Box 286  
*Hayahad Digest*, 1961-1983  
 Rowden, Rebecca. *Baptists in Israel: the letters of Paul and Marjorie Rowden, 1952-1957*.  
     Nashville, TN: Fields Publishing, 2010.  
 Owens, Laurella. *Shalom*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1963.

### **Container List**

#### Box 1

- 1.1 1954 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.2 1955 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.3 1956 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.4 1957 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.5 1958 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.6 1959 – Baptist Convention in Israel - Minutes
- 1.7 1961 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.8 1961 - History – Baptist Golden Jubilee – 50 years in Palestine/Israel by Dwight Baker
- 1.9 1962 – Baptist Convention in Israel – Class and lecture notes and information
- 1.10 1963 – Baptist Convention in Israel – Seminar notes and lecture information
- 1.11 1964 - Baptist Convention in Israel – Annual Meeting and Minutes
- 1.12 1964 - Class and lecture information
- 1.13 1965 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.14 1965 - Baptist Convention in Israel – Annual Meeting
- 1.15 1965 – Baptist Convention in Israel - Minutes
- 1.16 1965 – Class Seminar – Notes and Papers
- 1.17 1965 – New Testament – Notes and outlines for class
- 1.18 1965 – Petach Tikvh Congregation – Weekend Retreat, August, 1965
- 1.19 1966 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.20 1967 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.21 1967 - Baptist Convention in Israel – Seminar notes and information
- 1.22 1968 – Baptist Convention in Israel – Annual Meeting
- 1.23 1968 – Baptist Convention in Israel – Finances
- 1.24 1969 - Baptist Convention in Israel
- 1.25 1969 – Baptist Convention in Israel – Handbook of Decisions and Reports, 1964-1969
- 1.26 1970 – Baptist Convention in Israel

## Box 2

- 2.1 1971 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.2 1971 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.3 1972 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.4 1973 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.5 1974 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.6 1975 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.7 1975 – Program Based Design – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.8 1976 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.9 1977 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.10 1978 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.11 1979 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.12 1979 – Baptist Convention in Israel – Constitution and Bylaws
- 2.13 1980 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.14 1981 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.15 1981 – Baptist Convention in Israel – Annual Meeting
- 2.16 1983 – Baptist Convention in Israel
- 2.17 1992 – Baptist Convention in Israel