
John Hagee, pastor of the 17,000-member Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, is one of the most dedicated and outspoken American Christian Zionists. He ardently supports Israel as a heroic outpost of Judeo-Christian values on the front lines of the fight against Islamic fascists. …

“In June of 1978, I went to Israel as a tourist and came home as a Zionist,” Hagee recalled. “I have traveled the world but as I walked the cobblestone streets of the Holy City, I knew I was home! My roots were there! I felt a very special presence in that sacred city that changed my life forever!” His public advocacy of Israel began in 1981, when Israeli jets bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak. He was shocked by the public hostility to this act in the West. Hagee, by contrast, felt that Israel had done the world a favor and he proposed to his congregation and to other pastors in San Antonio that they organize an event to celebrate the Jewish state. They’ve been mounting a gala Night to Honor Israel every year since, and raising money for Israel. At the 2007 event alone, John Hagee Ministries gave Israel over $8 million dollars, as we have seen.

In February 2006 Hagee announced the formation of a potentially important umbrella organization called the Christians United for Israel (CUFI), which he intends to be a Christian version of the influential Jewish lobby AIPAC, only stronger.


A Night to Honor Israel is an expression of Christian solidarity with the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

The Bible commands us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6), to speak out for Zion’s sake (Isaiah 62:1), to be watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem (Isaiah 62:6) and to bless the Jewish people (Genesis 12:3). These and many other Bible verses have one overriding message – as Christians we have a Biblical obligation to defend Israel and the Jewish people in their time of need.

As you know, the Middle East is a dangerous neighborhood. Israel is surrounded by enemies bent on her destruction. But the troubling fact is that Israel is under attack right here in America. On college campuses across this country, Israel is being condemned as a racist, oppressive, apartheid regime. And in churches across the country, anti-Israel activists are fooling our young people into believing that their values demand that they stand against Israel, not with her.

We must stand up and speak up for Israel in her time of need. Our faith demands it. The times require it. Silence is not an option. We will be silent no longer.

We pray that you will attend a Night to Honor Israel to stand up and speak up for the State of Israel and the Jewish people.


The Late Great Planet Earth tapped into the Zeitgeist, a mood of anxious disaffection. The Cold War was heating up again in Vietnam, Israel’s existence was still not secure, liberalization and prosperity had permitted an orgy of hedonistic excess, and Man now had the know-how to destroy the entire planet in the instantaneous and wholesale fashion described in the Book of Revelation.

Hal was preaching on California college campuses in the late 1960s. Noting and promoting the reviving Christian faith of students who’d overdosed on drugs and sex and freedom, he was hearing many ask themselves if God was still blessing America. Was God still on America’s side? Prophecy was ‘in’; young people were anxious to make sense of developments. In April 1967 Lindsey told a campus crowd that the Jews would soon conquer Jerusalem. When two months later little Israel triumphed over a Goliath of three Arab armies in the Six Day War and duly took the West Bank and the Old City of Jerusalem, Lindsey was perfectly placed to point out that, whatever God thought of America, he was demonstrably on Israel’s side. …

Lindsey set about forecasting the content of the next four decades of newspaper headlines in The Late Great Planet Earth. …

The … slim paperback … sold a million within a month of its appearance in 1970 and has sold over 30 million since, in fifty-four languages.

The mission of Bridges of Peace is to “build bridges of understanding and support between the Christian and Jewish communities – to begin a process of healing ancient wounds and misunderstandings that have long endured between Christians and Jews. We do this by expressing support for the Jewish people in tangible ways and by educating Christians about the Jewish roots of Christianity and the value of interpreting the Bible from a Hebraic perspective. We are also vitally concerned for the present and future well-being of Israel as a Jewish state in the Middle East, and of her citizens.” …

Bridges for Peace conducts correspondence courses, Bible-study tour programs, conferences, and seminars. In the name of encouraging and expressing love for Israel, the organization carries out numerous large-scale programs of assistance to the local needy (under the name Operation Ezra), with a special emphasis on recent immigrants. These include Jerusalem’s largest continuing food bank program, which delivers a ton of food every day (for which the organization has been honoured with the “Guardian of Jerusalem” Award, presented by Mayor Ehud Olmert, in the presence of the then prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, in 1997), and a program that provides volunteers to repair, renovate, and furnish the homes of the poor and elderly.

In 1994 … the ADL published and widely distributed a 200-page book entitled *The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America*. As the title indicates, this book was not simply a dissent from the Religious Right’s position on abortion and prayer in the schools: it was a frontal attack on the Religious Right and its leaders. Foxman set the tone in the book’s forward, where he wrote that the report would demonstrate that:

> the religious right brings to cultural disagreements a rhetoric of fear, suspicion, even hatred. The result is not surprising: real debate over the problems afflicting American society is eclipsed by the blare of grievance and blame and chauvinism, and the fragile structures of consensus are bulldozed by sectarian, absolutist declarations. In this way we proceed down the road to the “Christian nation” trumpeted by these prophets of rage.

The ADL report did not go so far as to claim that the Religious Right as a movement was anti-Semitic. Yet here was a long and detailed report from the nation’s leading anti-Semitism watchdog warning about an “assault on tolerance and pluralism” by the Religious Right. …

The ADL book sparked a firestorm. The leading organ of the Religious Right, the Christian Coalition, issued a forty-page rebuttal, and angry letters were exchanged between Abe Foxman and the Coalition’s president, Pat Robertson. A group of seventy-five mostly neoconservative Jews published a full-page advertisement in the New York Times denouncing the ADL report. Relations between evangelical Christians and the organized Jewish community were badly frayed. …

The parties were pulled back from the brink by a man respected in both camps: Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein.

Yechiel Eckstein didn’t start out to be controversial. The son of an Orthodox rabbi in Ottawa, Canada, he got his own rabbinical ordination from Yeshiva University and joined the staff of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). In those early days he was the model of a young mainstream Jewish organization man.

In 1977, American Nazis threatened to stage a march in Skokie, Illinois, a Chicago suburb with a large population of Holocaust survivors. The ADL sent Eckstein from New York to help the local community organize and round up Christian support. What he found surprised him. Jesse Jackson was headquartered in Chicago but, unlike his mentor, Martin Luther King Jr., who was always attentive to Jewish causes, Jackson had little interest. White Protestant mainstream churches were apathetic at best. The American Civil Liberties Union actually supported the First Amendment rights of the Nazis to march. Eckstein was surprised to find that evangelicals more than any other group, were prepared to stand with the Jews of Skokie.

He went back to New York with this news like Marco Polo returning from China. There were conservative Christians in the heartland who took the Bible literally and believed the Jews were God’s Chosen People. Not only that, they wanted to be friends. Eckstein saw this as a vast reservoir of support, an untapped resource for Israel, Soviet Jewry, and other causes, but his report was greeted in New York with incredulity. Few ADL leaders had actually met an evangelical. As far as they were concerned, born-again Christians were KKK night riders, toothless fiddlers, and flat-earth troglodytes. They ordered Eckstein to return to Chicago and commune with some respectable Episcopalians. …

But Eckstein knew what he knew. He quit the ADL and tried, unsuccessfully, to interest some other mainstream Jewish group in establishing relations with the Christian fundamentalists. There were no takers. Eckstein didn’t even bother reaching out to his fellow Orthodox rabbis, many of whom considered (and still consider) even setting foot in a Christian church to be a grave sin.
Instead, Eckstein went back to Chicago and opened his own organization, which he grandly dubbed the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. He had no salary, no health plan, no insurance, and a pregnant wife. By day he made a little money as a part-time congregational rabbi. In off-hours he toured the country, going from church to church preaching a gospel of Jewish-Christian common interest and solidarity. …

Even Eckstein’s severest Jewish critics admit that he has an unrivaled ability to reach conservative Christians, and many who once mocked or opposed him for relying on the kindness of strangers now want his help. Hadassah, the Zionist women’s organization whose magazine once refused to run Eckstein’s paid ads, now begs to do join projects with him. A few years ago the chairman of the Jewish Agency, the international governing body of Zionism, declined to be photographed with Eckstein. Today Eckstein is a member of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors. Even colleagues in the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America who once scorned him have seen the light. …

Yechiel Eckstein has a genuine belief in the basic goodness of evangelicals. …

“Jews contribute to Jewish causes out of communal obligation,” he told me. … “They don’t give out of responsibility. They give because the Lord told them to give. They’re moved to do it. …”

“Jews have such a cynical, negative view of these people,” says Eckstein. “There are all sorts of crazy conspiracy theories out there about what the evangelicals want. But they don’t have ulterior motives. These are good, religious people who love Israel and want to help. What’s the matter with that?”

For well over a decade, evangelicals have been publicly expressing solidarity with the State of Israel and the Jewish people at a prayer breakfast held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the National Religious Broadcasters. The event was conceived and is led by Ed McAteer, founder of the Religious Roundtable.

Each year the event has grown in numbers and stature as leading evangelicals, members of the Jewish communities, and dignitaries from the Israeli and United States governments come together. The breakfasts have usually been held in Washington D.C., but in recent years other cities have hosted the event, including the city of Jerusalem in Israel.

These are impressive gatherings, and it seems that each one leaves something special to be taken home and remembered. For example, of all the speeches made by leading dignitaries – Christian and Jewish – at the breakfast in Jerusalem, I remember most vividly a two-minute talk made by Irvin Borowsky, a prominent Jewish businessman from Philadelphia. He expressed his appreciation for evangelical Christians by saying that his feelings were very personal. In 1903, in Russia, his parents were hidden by Christians beneath straw in a wagon and taken to safety during a bloody pogrom. I was deeply touched by his words. …

The other was expressed during a visit several months later with a prominent Israeli friend in Jerusalem, who also spoke at the event. We had been together for several of these affairs and were chatting about the Memphis meeting. We agreed that it had been a bit different from previous breakfasts. …

“I think it was because there was not a feeling being there as two camps – eyeing each other with a bit of suspicion.

“The feeling seemed to be one of unity; we sat together as friends.”

And so it should be.

At that breakfast, as is always true, no evangelical went undercover about his or her faith. Nor was any Jewish participant the less Jewish. But there
was a sense of camaraderie – a bridging, if you will, that seemed to bring us to do the common ground we share because of who we are.

Perhaps this attitude is a natural outgrowth of the threat that both communities are feeling from an increasingly hostile culture. Maybe significant segments of the Jewish and evangelical communities are beginning to appreciate how much we have in common and are seeing reasons why we should strengthen our relationships.

Or it may just be that God is doing something on both sides of the line “for such a time as this.”

On 30 September 1980, a group of evangelical Christians resident in Jerusalem, under the leadership of Dutch theologian and pastor Jan Willem van der Hoeven, announced the opening of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. Born in Haarlem in the Netherlands in 1940, a graduate of the Bible College of London University, ordained in the Armenian Evangelical Church, van der Hoeven had already been in Israel for seven years, most recently serving as the warden of the Garden Tomb. He had been active in charismatic/Pentecostal fellowships in the city, and in the circles that had formed around Douglas Young. The “Embassy” announced that it would represent what it said was the vast majority of Christian people who wished to see their governments represented in the Israeli capital. The organization would stand with the Jews in affirming what God had said about Israel’s right to rule in Jerusalem. …

Today it has active representation in over 100 countries. It has eighty-two branches worldwide and a supporting membership of many tens of thousands. It publishes a newsletter, *A Word from Jerusalem*, and a monthly commentary on current affairs originally called the *Middle East Intelligence Digest*, now the *Middle East Digest*. In the United States, in addition to having many branches, it plays a role in the lobbying organization “Christians’ Israel Public Action Campaign (CIPAC).” …

Two areas in which ICEJ has surpassed Bridges [for Peace] are the organization of mass meetings of Christian visitors in support of Israel and active promotion of immigration of Jews to Israel from abroad. ICEJ insists that Christians are duty bound to assist the morale of the people of Israel by visiting their country. This is a duty quite apart from the more generally recognized privilege of visiting Christian holy sites. Christian tourists must be aware that they are visiting Israel. In this light, the ICEJ has made the focus of its calendar the organization of a massive rally during the time of *Succoth* (Tabernacles, or “Booths”), a festival that takes place in the fall, several weeks before Christmas, and that is said to be the only major festival not incorporated into the Christian year. In recent years, the number of participants has reached seven thousand, which makes this, according to ICEJ, the largest regular annual tourist event in Israel. ICEJ holds its convention during the festival, and those attending from all the continents of the world march and dance through the city of Jerusalem in
demonstration of solidarity with Israel. In this way, not only do Christians “show concern for the Jewish people and the reborn State of Israel, by being a focus of comfort…” (‘Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God’ [Isaiah 40:1] but they “take part through these activities in preparing the way of the Lord and to anticipate his reign from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3.)” All this is seen as fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 14:16: “And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of the tabernacles.”

After 9/11, the priorities of the Christian Right shifted. While the movement remained devoted to its trademark social issues, the war on terror in general, and support for Israel in particular, became a leading priority. The Christian Right was now prepared to send its hard-earned political capital on Israel’s defense. …

Appearing on the October 6, 2002, edition of 60 Minutes, the Reverend Jerry Falwell sent a clear message that Israel is not just a priority of the Christian Right, but the priority of the Christian Right. According to Falwell:

There are 70 million of us, and if there is one thing that brings us together quickly, it’s whenever we begin to detect our government becoming a little anti-Israel. There’s nothing that would bring the wrath of the Christian public in this country down on this government like abandoning or opposing Israel in a critical matter.

Pat Robertson too was outspoken in his support for Israel during the crisis. In an October interview, Robertson rose to Israel’s defense:

Israelis can’t allow a group of suicide bombers to continue to go to universities and kill innocent young people. To go to a pizza parlor and kill people. To go to a bar mitzvah and kill people. They have to stop it. And if the Palestinian Authority won’t stop it and Hamas won’t stop it… the Israelis have to come in with military force and suppress that kind of activity.

As the fall of 2002 wore on, more suicide bombings occurred in Israel. The Christian Zionists continued to demonstrate their solidarity with the Jewish State.