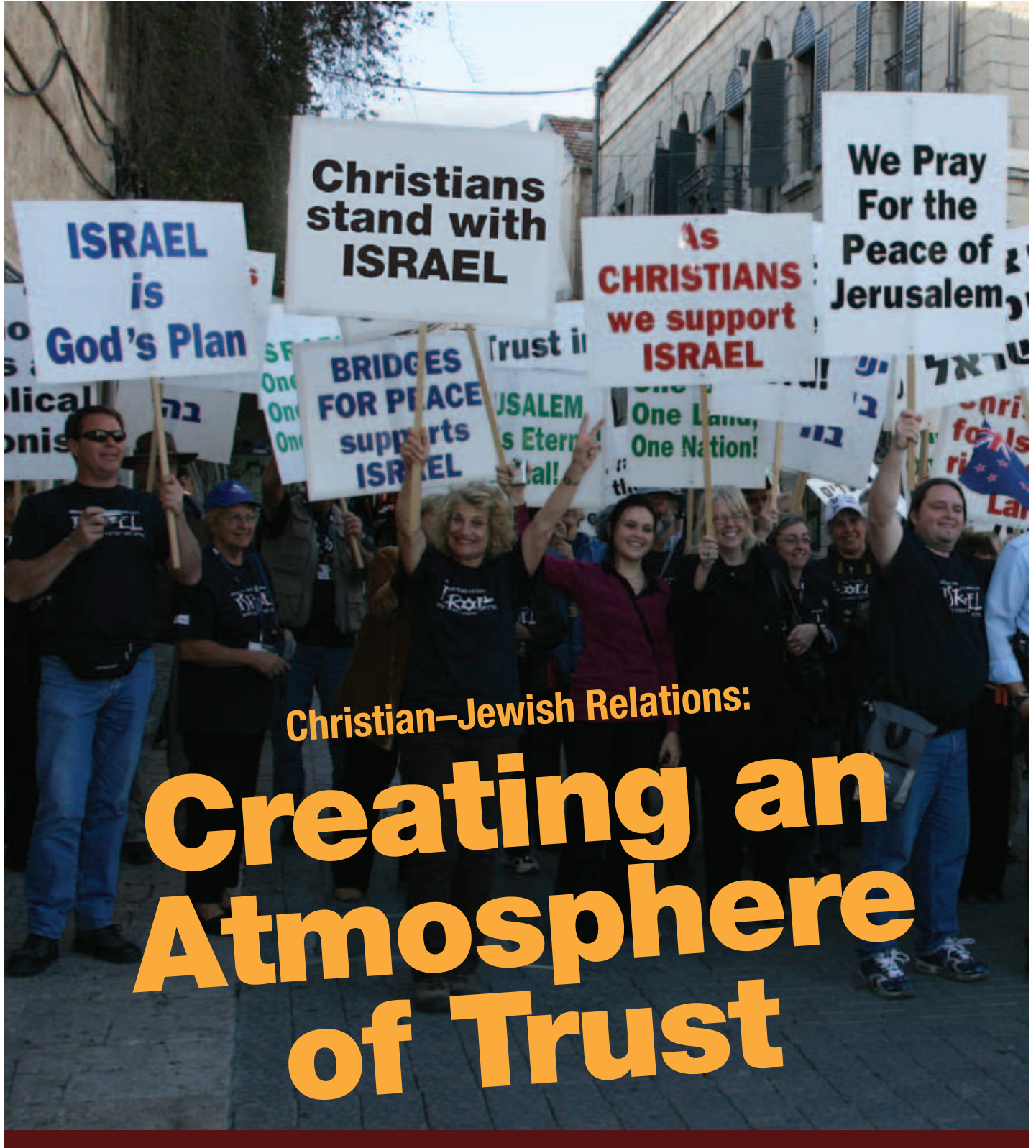


ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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Christian-Jewish Relations:

Creating an Atmosphere of Trust



Christian–Jewish Relations: Creating an Atmosphere of Trust



OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS, I have had some amazing opportunities to address interfaith meetings with large numbers of Christians and Jews in attendance. This teaching letter comes out of those encounters. As a Christian who supports Israel and loves the Jewish people, I am often called upon to explain myself.

Jewish people I meet with are almost always amazed at the support they are experiencing from segments of the Christian world, notably the evangelical community. I have had them question the fact that we love them, saying that for nearly 2,000 years, we hated them and caused them great pain. How is it that we now love them? Christians sometimes question the validity of our stand. Often they have been taught replacement theology and supersessionism, doctrines that teach that since the Jews rejected Yeshua (Jesus), God has rejected them and chosen a new people. These doctrinal stances have caused a rift between Christians and Jews that is nearly impassable.

Today, many of us sense that we are in a new era of Christian–Jewish relations. What an amazing fact that Bible-believing Christians all over the world are rising up in great numbers to support Israel and stand with the Jewish people. They come from many denominational backgrounds.

In response, Jewish people are beginning to recognize that Bible-believing Christians are their best friends in the world today. The Knesset Christian Allies Caucus (KCAC), composed of 18 members of the Knesset (Parliament) from six different political parties, has been building relationships with the Christian world for the past eight years. I have been honored to be invited as a non-member to the meetings from its very inception. Political leaders in 21 countries have responded by forming their own Israel Allies Caucus. In most cases, these efforts have been spearheaded by Christian leaders.

Still, we have a long way to go to create an atmosphere of trust between our groups. The fact that I am so frequently quizzed by Jewish people who are baffled by this support and want to know what the motives are convinces me that we have much work to do. For the past two years, I have been invited to be one of several speakers to address Jewish and Christian leaders at an annual meeting cosponsored by the World Jewish Congress and the KCAC. It is a night to honor Christians who support Israel. There are always several Knesset members present. Last year, the speaker before me was a Knesset Member. He waxed eloquent about the new day we are living in, in which the best friends Israel has are Christians. He closed by thanking the Christians present for their support and saying, “but we don’t want to know why you do it.”

I sat there with my thoughts spinning. I was the next speaker and my planned speech was titled “Six Reasons Why Christians Support Israel.” After a quick prayer, I knew that I was to continue as planned. Of course, when I announced my topic, I had to acknowledge the previous speaker, and the room responded with laughter. Some of you who have been reading these teaching letters for some time may find that the information contained herein is not new information. However, I think that even long-time supporters will value having these lists compiled to be able to answer both Christian and Jewish friends who aren’t yet understanding.

Six Reasons Why Christians Support Israel

1. We love God and see that God loves Israel.

“For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure” (Ps. 135:4). Remember that when you see the name “Jacob” in the Bible, it either refers to Jacob the patriarch or to the people descended from him, the Jewish people. It never refers to the Church, even in the Newer Testament.



For the Lord has chosen *Jacob* for Himself, *Israel* for His *special treasure*.

(Ps. 135:4)



Christians all over the world are *rising up* in great numbers to *support Israel* and *stand* with the Jewish people.

I will *bless* those who bless you and *curse* those who curse you. (Gen. 12:3)

2. We are Bible believers.

As we read our Bibles, we have become aware that the Bible is the story of a people (the Jews), a land (Israel), and the God who chose them as His special treasure. As Christians, we support Israel because all other nations were created by acts of men, but Israel was created by an act of God.

Sadly, for many centuries, the average Christian did not read the Bible. Since the invention of the movable type printing press in 1440, when the Bible became more readily available, and the subsequent Protestant Reformation, Christians have been confronted with the many promises God gave to the Jewish people. With the rebirth of the State of Israel, Christendom has had to reexamine the promises to Israel found throughout the Scriptures. Previously, many Christian theologians taught that those promises referred to Christians. When the promises began to be literally fulfilled, we were confronted with the knowledge that God meant those promises and was fulfilling them literally.

3. We want to receive the blessings of God.

In Genesis 12:3, God promises Abraham that *"I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you."* Later, the psalmist says, *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper who love you"* (Psalm 122:6). In my years of being involved with Bridges for Peace and even earlier, I have seen over and over again that people who choose to bless Israel experience blessing in their lives.

Tom Hess, the head of Jerusalem House of Prayer for All Nations, has written a book chronicling the historical events of countries in Africa. He points out that the nations who have chosen to be a blessing to Israel have prospered, while the ones who curse have not prospered, in fact, often the opposite.

When we first moved to Israel, one of the families who supported us had several children and a limited family budget. After supporting our work in Israel for about a year, they wrote saying that when they made the promise to support us, it was with the knowledge that their budget would be painfully stretched. But, after faithfully sending in their gift each month, they had experienced unexpected financial blessing and were increasing their gift. I believe that any time we support and agree with God's stated plans and purposes, we will experience His blessing. Israel is definitely in that category!

4. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Jewish people.

Many Christians who study their Bibles and become more aware of the Hebraic roots of the Christian faith are becoming aware of this. We received the Bible through the hands of Jewish men inspired by God. This precious document—the foundation of our faith, the source of our knowledge of God and His ways—is only available to us because of faithful Jewish scribes who copied and recopied the scrolls with careful attention to detail. Amazingly, the modern Hebrew Bible is virtually identical to the ancient scrolls which have been uncovered with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

We must thank the Jewish people for the patriarchs and the prophets, who were all Jewish. As we look at the Christian Scriptures and read the Gospels and the book of Acts, we realize that Mary, Joseph, and Yeshua were all Jewish. The apostles were all Jewish. In fact, virtually everything that we hold dear to our faith came from the Jewish people! The Apostle Paul emphasized this debt in Romans 15:27: *“For if the Gentiles have shared in their [the Jews] spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.”*

5. Yeshua was Jewish.

More Christians are realizing that it is rather hypocritical to love Yeshua and hate His family. He was born Jewish and raised in a Jewish environment. The gospel of Luke outlines the earliest part of His life, and we see that His family kept the laws of Moses relating to the birth of a firstborn son. He was circumcised on the eighth day, the redemption of the firstborn son was paid, and His mother took an offering to the Temple as required by the Law. Even though *bar mitzva*hs (when a Jewish boy becomes a man at age 13) weren't formalized in the time of Yeshua, it is widely thought that the account of the meeting with the elders in the Temple when Yeshua was 12 years old, could have been part of a Jewish coming-of-age event.

Yeshua wore a *tallit* (prayer shawl), worshipped in synagogues, constantly quoted the Hebrew Scriptures, and showed respect for the Bible. His criticisms, without exception, were related to practices, interpretation of the Scripture, and hypocrisy. He was well versed in the Jewish scholarship of His day. The Mishnah, which was oral tradition in His time and written down only later, was known by Yeshua. He was a Jew in every way. He never attended a church and was never called a Christian.

I have shared the following story before, but we have so many new readers that I want to share it again. Years ago, I had a friend who attended the same church I did. One Sunday, she approached me questioning why Christians should love Israel and the Jewish people. She said, “Why should they be the chosen people? Why aren't we Christians the chosen people? After all, they don't accept Jesus and we do.” As she was talking, I was praying silently. I wanted to give the right response.

When it came time for my answer, I said, “Debbie, do you pray?”

“Of course,” she responded.

“Well then why don't you ask God to answer that question?” I said.

All week long, I felt terrible that I hadn't given a better answer. So it was with great surprise when the next Sunday Debbie thanked me for helping her understand about the Jewish people. After our conversation, Debbie had done exactly what I suggested. After praying and asking God for understanding, she received a revelation that the Jewish people are God's royal family. Just like England has a royal family, God has a royal family (Israel). And just like the royal family



Yeshua speaks with the elders in the Temple and reads the Torah scroll in the synagogue.

...And the desert
shall *rejoice*
and *blossom*
as a *rose*.

(Isa. 35:1b)

members in England don't always act perfectly, so God's royal family may not always act as they should. But, England continues to honor the royal family, and so we should honor His royal family because the King comes from that family. What a beautiful picture! We need to honor the Jewish family of our King.

6. We want to participate in the fulfilling of Bible prophecy.

As Christians see the literal fulfillment of prophecies made by Israel's prophets, we realize that God is actively involved in human history in this time, and we want to participate. I have lived in Israel for 23 years and have seen over a million Jewish people come to Israel from the former Soviet Union. I have been awed to personally witness the fulfillment of prophecy! *"Behold the days are coming, says the LORD that it shall no more be said, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt' but 'the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where he had driven them.' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers"* (Jer. 16:14).

The prophet Isaiah told of the day when, *"Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit"* (Isa. 27:6) When you stop to consider the size of the state of Israel, the fact that Israeli produced fruit is found in grocery stores around the world is amazing. I love this Scripture because it is being literally fulfilled in our days and portrays that even small details of the Scripture are important to God. Isaiah 35:1 says the desert shall blossom as a rose. Today, you can travel in the desert areas of Israel and find fields of roses growing, which will be sold in high-end European florist shops.

The last phrase of Genesis 12:3 says *"in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* How amazing that this is true today! As Christians, we are undoubtedly blessed, but all families of the world are blessed from the people descended from Abraham. Though they comprise 1/1000th of the world's population, Israeli Jews have developed much of today's cell phone and computer technology. Incredible medical advances have been developed in Israel saving lives all over the world. And, Israel is one of the first nations on the scene of disasters around the world. The world is being blessed by the children of Abraham just as God promised.

I concluded my speech by saying: "I can't speak for all Christians, but I can tell you that the Christians at Bridges for Peace do not support Israel out of a desire for Armageddon. We don't want to see you harmed. Rather we pray for your blessing. And if bad things come to Israel, we assure you that we will stand with you to help and bless you in the midst of trouble. Yes, we still have bridges to build between our communities, but I am encouraged. Today, we are seeing the fruits of many years of investment in relationship-building. Today, I believe that Bible-believing, God-fearing Christians are the best friends Israel has. Never again will Israel stand alone! You have friends."

Six Reasons Why Israel Should Accept Christian Friendship

The bridges that are being built between the Jewish and Christian communities are strengthening. Any good relationship has responsibilities on both sides. So in this year's meeting, I addressed our Jewish friends and gave reasons why I felt they should accept our offer of friendship.

I started my speech by saying: "Every year when we gather for this event, I am gripped again with the knowledge that Christians and Jews are in a new era. Even though we are only about 150 people in this room, I know that the Christians present represent millions of Bible-believing Christians who have the same heart as we do—a heart to see a better future and a commitment to action to ensure that this new era does not wither and die. It is my fervent hope that the Jewish people in this room also represent a growing percentage of the Jewish community worldwide. Last year, I shared with you six reasons why Christians support Israel and the Jewish people. Tonight, I would like to give six reasons why Israel and the Jewish people should accept the friendship offered by Christians today."

1. Christians are standing with Israel.

Christians are showing their support politically, financially, and by visiting Israel in record numbers. Thousands come to Israel for the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) celebration sponsored by the International Christian Embassy. In the United States, Pastor John Hagee and his organization Christians United for Israel have galvanized thousands of Christians each year to go to Washington DC and talk to their elected representatives and senators about why they should strongly support Israel.

Through Bridges for Peace, millions of dollars are given each year to support projects to help new immigrants and the needy in Israel through many humanitarian projects that include the distribution of 65 metric tons of food each month to 27,000 people in 52 communities. Many other Christian organizations are reaching out in support of Israel in many creative ways. Christians are voting for Israel with their feet, their minds, and their pocketbooks.

2. Christians are ready to tell Israel's story.

They are active on the Internet, Facebook, other social media, and YouTube. They are active as advocates, speakers, and teachers. They will do more as they are better equipped with the facts. Organizations like Bridges for Peace and others are dedicated to giving them the facts they need to tell Israel's story better. We are thankful for the partnerships we share with the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Jewish think tanks, and articulate individuals who enable our staff to get the facts to Christians around the world who can make a difference.

3. Jews and Christians are natural allies.

We share a common book—the Bible. We share a belief in the Almighty, the Creator. And we share an anticipation of the coming Messianic age, though I understand that there are significant areas of disagreement. For centuries, we have allowed those disagreements to define our relationship. Perhaps the time has come to concentrate on the things we agree on and allow God to sort out the differences. I will remain a fully committed Christian who believes that Yeshua is the Messiah and will trust God to reveal His purposes to us all.

4. Jews and Christians share enemies.

How often have we heard the canard, “First the Saturday people and then the Sunday people”? I believe that we need to make sure that our nations, governments, and fellow citizens understand that Israel is not the only target. Edmund Burke said, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” We must not fall into the trap of complacency.

Today in Nigeria, Egypt, and other Islamic regimes, Christians are being murdered for their faith by Muslim extremists. From the Second World War, we see what happens when evil is not stopped. How wonderful to learn that Christians are not the only ones speaking out on behalf of the Christians in Nigeria! I was so blessed to read of B'nai B'rith International's President Allan J. Jacobs speaking out on their behalf in January. He said, “The international community must stand in solidarity with the people of Nigeria and strongly condemn attacks targeting a religious community.”

Since 911, the United States has been the target of many attacks, and it is important to remember that those attacks did not come as a result of military action in the Middle East. The United States' military action was a response to an act of war by Islamic radicals who killed more than 3,000 Americans in that attack. Israel is threatened on many sides by the same Islamic radical forces who want to destroy and kill. The Christians and Jews must stand firm against this kind of genocidal intention and action.

5. The biblical values that we hold dear are under attack.

I believe it is time Christians and Jews stand up together against the slide into secular humanism, or I fear the life we all cherish will disappear. There is a God, and He has given



Photo by Kathy DeGagne

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us the blueprint to successful and blessed lives. The ancient Israelites were given the choice of a life of blessing or a life of cursing. Today, each person is given the same choice. Let's choose life for our families, communities, and world. We have the Book with the answers. The world is choosing the way of cursing by marginalizing the way of the Book, the people of the Book, and the God of the Book.

6. Tikkun Olam

Tikkun olam is the Jewish concept of fixing the world through righteous action. It has a spiritual connotation. I encouraged the audience of Jewish-Christian leadership to work together to show the nature of the Almighty through our actions. *Tikkun olam* begins with right actions, with human beings making the decision to act in a godly fashion. We each make decisions every day that can affect the way the Almighty is viewed by those around us and those all over the world. Yeshua said they will "see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). *Tikkun olam* starts with each of us.

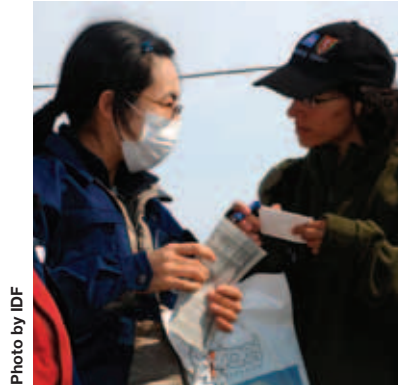
Israelis take this concept seriously. The desire to show God's nature through *tikkun olam* is why Israel is consistently seen at world disaster scenes. It is why they send scientists to developing countries to train in agriculture and so much more. When Japan suffered a devastating earthquake and tsunami last March, Israel immediately offered to help. It was an honor to be one of the organizations who supported this mission of mercy, providing finances and support on the ground with Japanese translators from our team.

Christians and Jews can work together on more joint activities. Our enemies recognize us as the people of the Book. We need to act like people of the Book and cause the name of the God of the Book to be lifted up, sanctified, and glorified to the peoples of this world.

Concluding Thoughts

While the reasons listed above are not the only reasons for Christian support or convincing proofs that Jewish people should respond, I believe that you will find them useful tools in helping your friends understand your motivation and perhaps convince some to join God as He fulfills His covenant promises to the Jewish people. We can and should be partners with God in His plans to bring about redemption.

By Rev. Rebecca J. Brimmer
International President and CEO



Disaster



Technology



Medicine

All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

Bridges for Peace is a Jerusalem-based, Bible-believing Christian organization supporting Israel and building relationships between Christians and Jews worldwide through education and practical deeds expressing God's love and mercy.

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