

BETTY McCOLLUM
4TH DISTRICT, MINNESOTA

1714 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6631
FAX: (202) 225-1968

165 WESTERN AVENUE NORTH
SUITE 17
ST. PAUL, MN 55102
(651) 224-9191
FAX: (651) 224-3056

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April 25, 2007

Pastor James. M. (Mac) Hammond
Living Word Christian Center
9201 - 75th Avenue North
Brooklyn Park, MN 55428

Dear Pastor Hammond:

A letter of invitation to your church's April 29th event, "A Night to Honor Israel," was received in my St. Paul office. In response, I am writing to inform you that I must decline the invitation.

Your event and events like it are "being coordinated and conducted around the country by Christians United for Israel," according to the invitation. The founder of this organization, Pastor John Hagee, is prominently highlighted on the invitation as an event speaker, along with Israel's Consul General Barukh Binah.

Pastor Hammond, freedom of speech and the freedom to practice one's religion are cherished American rights. However, well publicized public statements by Pastor Hagee demonstrate extremism, bigotry and intolerance that is repugnant. For example:

"I believe that New Orleans had a level of sin that was offensive to God ... I believe that the Hurricane Katrina was, in fact, the judgment of God against the city of New Orleans." (Fresh Air, 9/18/2006)

"Those who live by the Quran have a scriptural mandate to kill Christians and Jews." (Fresh Air, 9/18/2006)

"I would hope the United States would join Israel in a military pre-emptive strike to take out the nuclear capability of Iran for the salvation of Western civilization." (Jerusalem Post, 3/21/2006)

These statements are not representative of the people of Minnesota nor do I believe they reflect the views of the people of Israel whom the Pastor purports to be advocating on behalf of at your church. How does one "honor Israel" with an individual whose toxic statements pollute the environment of peaceful religious coexistence, cooperation and

respect that we strive to achieve in America, and especially in Minnesota, among Christians, Jews, Muslims and people of all faiths?

Pastor Hammond, it seems I am not alone in this belief. A clergyman from Pastor Hagee's own hometown of San Antonio, TX, Rabbi Barry Block, was identified in the *Jewish Weekly* as a supporter of Israel and characterizes Hagee as promoting, "...**extremist anti-Palestinian positions and anti-Muslim prejudice...**" and states, "**I do not believe Pastor Hagee's activism is good for Israel.**" (*Jewish Weekly*, 3/9/2007)

My support and much of America's support for Israel is built on a historic partnership between our two nations and peoples, sharing a common goal of living in peace, security and freedom. Unlike Pastor Hagee, I support working for the "roadmap for peace" in the Middle East, Israel living side-by-side in peace and security with an independent Palestinian state. This is a goal many of us in Congress share with both Israeli political leaders and citizens.

Pastor Hammond, your invitation says this event's purpose is for people to "*speak and act with one voice in support of Israel and the Jewish people.*" As an elected official and a person of faith, I feel compelled to speak out against a voice, like Pastor Hagee's, that promotes or, even worse, preaches intolerance and bigotry -- whether in churches, synagogues or mosques. Minnesota is a state in which multiculturalism, religious tolerance, honest debate and a spirit of respect are treasured. Pastor Hagee's voice is clearly inconsistent with our Minnesota values and I believe with the values of the people of Israel.

Sincerely,



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

cc: Minnesota Congressional Delegation
His Excellency Sallai Meridor, Ambassador of Israel



from the desk of **Pastor Mac Hammond**

emailed for more info 4/18

Tuesday, March 20, 2007

The Honorable Betty McCollum
1714 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-2304

Dear Representative McCollum,

My wife Lynne and I would like to extend an invitation to you to attend a very special event - "A Night to Honor Israel," scheduled for Sunday, April 29, 2007 at 6:30 p.m., at Living Word Christian Center.

"A Night to Honor Israel" events are being coordinated and conducted around the country by Christians United for Israel. They are designed to give people an opportunity to join together in demonstration of solidarity with Israel and support for the Jewish people.

I have enclosed a brochure for the event which will provide you with more details as needed and the following are some of the Jewish organizations that are attending.

- American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)
- Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC)
- Made In Israel
- Minneapolis Jewish Federation
- United Jewish Fund And Council Of St. Paul

We would be honored to have you attend and if you are able to join us please call my office on or before Friday, March 30, 2007 so we can arrange special seating for you.

If you should have any questions or need further information, feel free to contact my office at 763-315-7003 or email my assistant Brenda at bhaines@lwcc.org.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

James M. (Mac) Hammond
Pastor

Positive. Powerful. Practical.

LivingWord
CHRISTIAN CENTER

Definitely not church as usual.

ערב הוקרה לישראל

הנה לא-ינום ולא יישן שומר ישראל

Information & Directions

- FREE PARKING
- DUE TO LIMITED SEATING, NO CHILDREN PLEASE
- SPECIAL RESERVED SEATING FOR JEWISH GUESTS UNTIL 6:15 P.M.

*"Indeed, the Guardian of Israel
neither slumbers nor sleeps.*

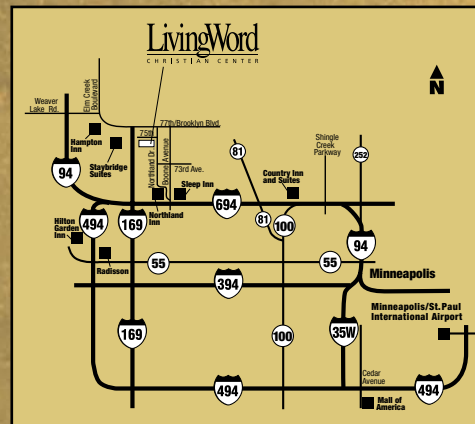
*The L-rd is your guardian;
the L-rd is your protective
shade at your right hand.*

*The sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.*

*The L-rd will guard you from all evil;
He will guard your soul.*

*The L-rd will guard your going and
your coming from now and for all time."*

Psalm 121



THIS IS A NON-PROSELYTIZING
MULTI-FAITH EVENT.

HOSTED AT:

LivingWord
CHRISTIAN CENTER

9201 75TH AVENUE NORTH, BROOKLYN PARK, MINNESOTA 55428
LWCC.ORG 763-315-7000

4.29
07

*Night to
Honor
Israel*



APRIL 29, 2007

2007 NIGHT TO HONOR ISRAEL EVENT
HOSTING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS:

MR. AND MRS. MIKE FITERMAN
MR. AND MRS. GARY RAPPAPORT
MR. AND MRS. ILAN SHARON
REVEREND AND MRS. TIM BURT
MRS. JOANN MAGNUSON
MR. AND MRS. BOB NAEGELE, JR.

2007

Night to Honor Israel



*“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem;
may those who love you have peace.”*

PSALM 122:6

Night to Honor Israel is designed to give people an opportunity to join together in a demonstration of solidarity and support for Israel and the Jewish people. It is a non-conversionary event designed to magnify the common roots of Christians and Jews, and visibly express the love of G-d without a hidden agenda.

There are an ever increasing number of Christian churches, ministers, and people throughout the USA who embrace the importance of this effort and believe to honor their G-d, they must honor Israel and the Jewish people.

Night to Honor Israel events are being coordinated and conducted around the country by Christians United for Israel, whose purpose is to provide a national association through which every pro-Israel church, organization, or individual in America can speak and act with one voice in support of Israel and the Jewish people.

We encourage you to join us for this historical event of solidarity and support. The music will be inspiring, the speakers motivating, and the moment... truly monumental and memorable!

“For you [Israel] are a holy people to the L-rd, your G-d: the L-rd your G-d has chosen you to be His treasured people, out of all the peoples upon the face of the earth.”

DEUTERONOMY 7:6

Special performance from Israel by



FOR ZION'S SAKE Ariel, Israel

SUNDAY

April 29, 6:30 p.m.

Speakers include:



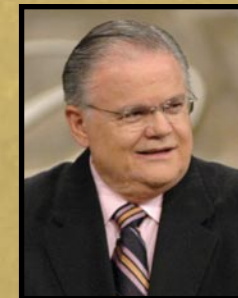
PASTOR
MAC HAMMOND

Living Word Christian Center
Minneapolis, MN



CONSUL GENERAL
BARUKH BINAH

Consul General of Israel
to the Midwest



PASTOR
JOHN HAGEE

Cornerstone Church
San Antonio, TX



MAYOR
RON NACHMAN

Mayor of Ariel, Israel

JEWISH JOURNAL.com

2007-03-30

Evangelical leader's speech backing Israel alarms some

By James D. Besser, Washington Correspondent

The tent-revival pro-Israel speech by the Rev. John Hagee thrilled many delegates at the recent policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

However, others were alarmed. It was not by Hagee's message, which was hardly new, but by the reaction of a pro-Israel community that chooses to see only one side of **a man and a movement with a complex agenda and a knack for recasting it for different audiences.**

Jewish leaders say that with Israel increasingly pilloried by mainline Protestant groups, the motives of the evangelicals don't matter, just the ardency of their support. So do many on the Israeli right. This week, the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus, in partnership with a Christian group that is working for the "restoration" of Israel, held its first Jerusalem Assembly for Christian Zionists.

But that reaction ignores the fact that Christian Zionists like Hagee are increasingly trying to affect U.S. Mideast policy. **The biblical perspective shaping that activism offers only more war and new holocausts for the Jews, not the peace that Israelis crave.**

Hagee stirred the AIPAC crowd with his promise that "50 million evangelicals and 5 million Jews" will work to solidify support for Israel. Mainstream pro-Israel leaders welcome the Christian Zionists' numbers, their willingness to raise money for Israel, their political clout and their tourism in Israel, even when fearful Jews stay home.

Israeli right-wingers love the Christian Zionists for another reason: Unlike most American Jews, these Christians believe that giving back the West Bank violates God's covenant with Israel.

However, there are also dangers centering largely on the motives of these lovers of Zion. When addressing Jewish groups, Hagee and others focus on only a biblical mandate to love the Jewish people and stand up for Israel. **But to fellow Christians, the focus is on biblical prophecy about new and horrific wars, death on an unimaginable scale and a peace that can come only with the 'Second Coming of Jesus.'**

In Hagee's 2005 book, "Jerusalem Countdown," he writes "no prophetic scripture is more crystal clear than Ezekiel's vivid and specific description of the coming massive war in the Middle East that will sweep the world toward Armageddon."

In a book emphasizing the Iranian threat, Hagee writes, "God holds the future of Israel in HIS hands, and it will be a glorious future." What he neglects to tell Jewish audiences is that the glory part applies only to Jews who have accepted Christ. "David's son, King Jesus, will rule and reign for one thousand years in the golden age of peace from Jerusalem," he writes.

Jewish leaders aren't unaware of this theology, but they dismiss it as irrelevant. We'll find out who the real messiah is when he comes, they flippantly say, and in the meantime, gladly accept their political support.

But these same Jewish leaders value this new alliance precisely because they believe the Christian Zionists are politically powerful. And Hagee, his eyes alight with the promise of the Christian redemption, seems unlikely to use his political clout to press for peaceful solutions that will avert the prophesied horrors.

Hagee has publicly called for pre-emptive attacks on Iran and linked that to Bible prophecy, promising that "the greatest war the world has ever seen will soon envelop Israel and Jerusalem." How, exactly, is that good for the Jews?

Rabbi Haim Dov Beliak, co-founder of Jews on First, a Web site that opposes Christian-right church-state policies, said that Hagee's "push for an attack on Iran is not based on a logically constructed policy but on cherry-picked biblical verses. And it is only the first step to the end-times scenario that Hagee enthusiastically predicts will engulf Israel in a devastating war."

At the same time, his growing connections to pro-Israel groups -- and his rapturous reception at AIPAC earlier this month —can only reinforce the dangerous charge that Jews are pushing America into yet another war.

If opposing any possible peace process results in horrific new wars, what's the problem? Isn't that what their prophecies demand as the birth pangs of the new millennial age? Confined to a church or revival tent, these views just seem wacky to outsiders, not scary.

But Hagee has the ear of important members of Congress and easy access to the White House; he has created a lobby to support Israel and, it must be assumed, promote his view of what Israel needs in this dangerous age.

Jewish leaders are increasingly willing to overlook how their partnership with the religious right advances a prophecy-driven approach to U.S. policy that proclaims a "love" of Israel but demands unimaginable new suffering for its citizens.

They also choose to ignore how the new alliance legitimizes a radical domestic agenda that stands in stark opposition to the views of a vast majority of American Jews.

They also ignore the tarnish to the whole pro-Israel movement that occurs when nonevangelicals see Jewish groups linked to one of the most polarizing, extreme forces in American society.

 [Click Here to Print](#)

The Jewish Week

SERVING THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF GREATER NEW YORK

(03/09/2007)

Hardline Pastor Gets Prime AIPAC Spot

Rev. John Hagee's appearance drawing criticism on eve of policy conference.

James D. Besser - Washington Correspondent

Growing ties between pro-Israel forces and a controversial, hardline "Christian Zionist" movement will move into the national spotlight at next week's policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the pro-Israel lobby.



One keynoter at the event, which annually draws hundreds of lawmakers, administration officials, diplomats and political hopefuls, will be Pastor John Hagee, founder of Christians United for Israel (CUFI), author of several books about biblical prophecy and an opponent of new territorial concessions to the Palestinians on biblical grounds.

Rev. Hagee, who will speak at a Sunday plenary, was also a leading backer of a controversial Christian broadcast venture in Israel that critics charge sought to convert Jews.

And a time when pro-Israel forces are being accused of beating the drums for war with Iran, Rev. Hagee seems to believe such a conflict is both inevitable and necessary. In his apocalypse-oriented book "Jerusalem Countdown," he predicted a nuclear showdown with Iran and said, "The end of the world as we know it is rapidly approaching ... rejoice and be exceedingly glad, the best is yet to be," according to a Wall Street Journal report posted on the CUFI Web site.

Last year, Rev. Hagee told the Jerusalem Post that "I would hope the United States would join Israel in a military pre-emptive strike to take out the nuclear capability of Iran for the salvation of Western civilization."

Israeli historian Michael Oren will also speak at Sunday's plenary.

Giving Rev. Hagee such prominence at the premier pro-Israel gathering of the year — he attended last year's conference — troubles some AIPAC supporters.

Rabbi Barry Block of Temple Beth El in San Antonio—the home of the John Hagee Ministries and to his 18,000-member Cornerstone Church—said he hopes the minister's presence will be balanced by "Christians who support Israel but who do not share the 'end of days' theology and extremist anti-Palestinian positions and anti-Muslim prejudice so often spewed by Pastor Hagee."

Rabbi Block, who said he is an "AIPAC supporter" and participates in local activities of the lobby, added that "there are those I love and respect in my community who believe we should work with Pastor

Hagee on the important concern we share—the welfare of the state of Israel. However, despite what may be good intentions, I don't think Pastor Hagee's activism is good for Israel."

Rabbi Haim Dov Beliak, cofounder of a We site that opposes Christian right church-state policies, said that Hagee's AIPAC appearance will mark a "decisive point when the costs of a relationship with Hagee couldn't be clearer. AIPAC has to know that Hagee's push for an attack on Iran is not based on a logically constructed policy but on cherry-picked biblical verses. And it is only the first step to the end-times scenario that Hagee enthusiastically predicts will engulf Israel in a devastating war."

A former AIPAC official said giving Rev. Hagee a key speaking slot represents one more step toward an AIPAC embrace of the Evangelicals that began more than two decades ago, and warned that it has political risks.

"This sends out a message of an endorsement by AIPAC at a time when these Christian groups seem to be losing power in Congress—and when the Democrats, who have long opposed this cozying up to the religious right, are now in power," this activist said.

But many pro-Israel leaders believe Rev. Hagee and other Christian Zionists, representing a growing political force, are a critical addition to the pro-Israel coalition — especially as "mainline" Protestant churches continue to castigate Israel for its West Bank policies.

But Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League and a strong critic of many Christian right groups, said he is not alarmed about Hagee's role in the policy conference.

"I think there is a role for him," Foxman aid. "He has earned a certain recognition with the community because of his support for Israel."

Foxman said he expects Hagee will get a good reception. "It's a friendly platform," he said. "I'm sure an overwhelming majority may be pleased with what he says."

That reflects an annual conference expected to strike a hawkish note on a number of issues, starting with the threat of a nuclear Iran.

Other keynote speakers will include Israeli opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu and—health permitting—Vice President Dick Cheney. The current Israeli government will be represented by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Defense Minister Amir Peretz and Ambassador Sallai Meridor.

Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh, several sources said, will tell delegates that increased aid to Palestinian moderates is in Israel's interests—a call that may conflict with a major AIPAC theme.

In a show of both political clout and bipartisanship that has become routine for AIPAC, the conference will feature speeches by all four top congressional leaders.

AIPAC says "more than 6,000 pro-Israel activists, including 1,200 students representing over 390 campuses" will attend. "Lead by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and both House and Senate Republican leaders all speaking under the same tent, this year's AIPAC Policy Conference underscores the bipartisan nature of American support for Israel," according to AIPAC

spokesman Josh Block. "The conference schedule also underscores the long history, breadth and diversity of America's centuries of support for the Jewish homeland in Israel."

Anxiety about Iran will dominate the conference, and it is a major element in the "action agenda" that, at least in theory, sets the group's goals for next year. Members of the executive committee will debate and vote on the statement on Sunday.

Proposed new language in the policy statement supports using "all means necessary for the United States, Israel and their allies to prevent Iran and other nations from developing nuclear, biological or chemical weapons and the vehicles for their delivery."

Lobbying for tougher sanctions legislation will also be a top priority for AIPAC delegates when they blanket Capitol Hill on Tuesday.

Protecting Israel's big chunk of foreign aid has traditionally been a top AIPAC priority, but this year the group will also emphasize "closely monitoring assistance to countries that are not supporting American objectives in the region."

At the top of that list: the Palestinian Authority. Congress has frozen an administration request for \$86 million in emergency aid to boost Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas' forces.

Pro-peace groups say they will not press AIPAC to soften its language about the Palestinians, as they have done in the past. Morton Klein, national president of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), will come to the executive committee meeting loaded with amendments aimed at toughening them.

The AIPAC conference will be the usual display of political clout, but the group also faces some new challenges, including a new Democratic leadership that remains strongly pro-Israel but less in lockstep with AIPAC than their Republican predecessors.

Congressional observers say AIPAC remains a legislative powerhouse, "but more lawmakers will now feel free to ask questions, especially about routine and nonbinding resolutions praising Israel and criticizing the Palestinians," said a longtime pro-Israel lobbyist.

But AIPAC's influence on signature issues like Iran and foreign aid to Israel remains intact despite the partisan shift, said Kean University political scientist Gilbert Kahn.

"AIPAC has successfully maneuvered itself through Democratic and Republican administrations, Democratic and Republican Congresses, and there's no reason to think they won't do it again," he said.

Kahn said AIPAC has also strengthened itself by aggressively "pushing the Orthodox community to engage. You have more and more Orthodox rabbis who are touting AIPAC and touting joining AIPAC. AIPAC understands that if you get the rabbis on board, they in turn will press the community to get involved."

That "dramatic shift," he said, may make AIPAC "less representative, but it also strengthens the group as voices on Mideast policy become more diverse.

"It's a source of strength because this is a community that is

comfortable with the direction AIPAC has taken in recent years," he said.

AIPAC also faces a rising challenge from Jewish groups on both the right and the left that take a different tack on Mideast policy, and that are increasingly active on Capitol Hill.

The Zionist Organization of America on the right and both Americans for Peace Now and the Israel Policy Forum on the left are expanding their lobbying, targeting areas where they feel AIPAC does not represent them.

None can come close to eclipsing AIPAC, although IPF, Washington sources say, is starting to build a network of campaign contributors who also support the group's perspective on Mideast affairs—a key element in AIPAC's strength.

Still, on the verge of the 2007 policy conference, they point to a changed lobbying environment for what remains the pre-eminent group on the pro-Israel scene.

Here is a list of other articles in this section

- [A Jewish Hand To Hold](#)
Federation end-of-life programs help the terminally ill and their families navigate the challenges from diagnosis to bereavement.
- [BBYO, On The Rebound](#)
Funder's investment has led to a dramatic turnaround for the once-venerable teen group.
- [Bearing Witness In Ukraine](#)
- [Case Of Ex-AIPAC Staffers Now A 'Rorschach Test'](#)
As trial nears, the issues fueling it are emerging as flashpoint for groups across political spectrum.
- [Democrats' Orthodox Push](#)
Challenging notion of a GOP lock, efforts underway to set up network of activists in advance of '08.
- [Holding Their Tongues?](#)
Post-Imus, some Jewish comics feeling the heat while others see no pressure.
- [It Takes Three Officers](#)
- [Tuesday The Rabbi Got Arrested](#)
In an unusual show of unity, 22 Jewish leaders — Orthodox, Conservative and Reform — are briefly jailed for anti-Iran protest outside the UN.
- [UJC Poised For Major Changes](#)
Federation umbrella group to embark on reorganization to better fulfill its fund-raising goals.
- [Virtual Values, Real Victims](#)
Students and administrators at Jewish schools grapple with pitfalls of online social networking.
- ['He Blessed Us With His Smile'](#)
Lincoln Square community on Upper West Side remembers Nathaniel Cohen, who lived a full life despite disabilities.

Interview: Pastor John Hagee discusses his foundation Christians United for Israel and his beliefs for the last days

4,057 words

18 September 2006

Fresh Air

English

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TERRY GROSS, host:

This is FRESH AIR. I'm Terry Gross. My guest, **John Hagee**, believes the end of days, the Rapture, and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ are imminent. He says the rebirth of Israel, the restoration of Jerusalem, is a prelude to the return of the Lord. His best-selling book, "Jerusalem Countdown" describes what else needs to happen in Israel before Jesus returns. Earlier this year, Hagee founded the group Christians United for Israel. It supports Israel's right to the land by biblical mandate. At its kickoff banquet in July speakers included Ken Mehlman, chair of the Republican National Committee, and Senators Rick Santorum and Sam Brownback. President Bush sent recorded greetings. **John Hagee** is the pastor of a megachurch in San Antonio, Texas, and has his own television ministry. Here's an excerpt from his collection of sermons "Jerusalem: Countdown to Crisis," describing what will happen just before the end of days and the Second Coming.

(Soundbite from "Jerusalem: Countdown to Crisis" by Pastor **John Hagee**)

Pastor HAGEE: In two minutes, let me tell you where we're going from here. This prophetic portrait paints the following sequence of event for the future. America and Europe become weakened and cannot respond to Israel in the time that Russia and the Arab invasion begins against Israel. This is God's plan. Why? Because he wants the Jewish people in Israel and around the world to know that he, the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob saved them, not America.

Secondly, Russia with Arab allies will plot and plan Israel's destruction. That's happening right now. It has been happening for 10 years. Iran's nuclear weapons have been produced with Russian scientists. The Islamic Arabs are using the Roadmap to Peace to get all of the land of Israel they can get. And when Israel finally says, 'Enough!' you're going to see the beginning of the implementation of Ezekial's war in 38:39. The critical point is the church is raptured before this war begins. I am telling you that makes this message one of the most thrilling prophetic messages you've ever heard in your life. You could get raptured out of this building before I get through finished preaching. We are that close to the coming of the Son of Man.

(Soundbite of cheers, clapping)

(End of soundbite)

GROSS: Pastor Hagee, you say that when Israel finally says 'Enough!' to attempts to take its land, you'll see the beginning of the implementation of Ezekial's war. What is Ezekial's war?

Pastor HAGEE: Ezekial's war in chapters 38 and 39, it's known in the Bible as the war of Gog and Magog. And in Ezekial 36, God gives the promise to the Jewish people that he's going to bring them out of their gentile graves. This was given through the prophet Ezekial when the Jewish people were in captivity. In 37 there is the dramatic presentation of the Valley of Dry Bones that come together to become an exceeding great army. This is a physical portrait of the nation of Israel that has been, if you will, in Death Valley for almost 2,000 years because, from the diaspora of 70 AD until the re-entrance into Israel May 15th, 1948, they were in gentile graves. And then in Ezekial 38 and 39, the prophet Ezekial very explicitly describes the war that's going to happen at some point in our future where Russia organizes Islamic nations to come against the state of Israel, and the end result of that war is that God himself is going to stand up and defend Israel, and the enemies of Israel are going to be crushed in such a dynamic fashion, quite similar to pharaoh and the Red Sea, that all of Israel will recognize that God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is indeed the Lord.

GROSS: In your interpretation of biblical prophecy, what has to happen in Israel before the Rapture.

Pastor HAGEE: Nothing. Absolutely nothing. There is no Bible prophecy that needs to be fulfilled before the Rapture of the church.

GROSS: But there's things you don't want to happen. You've said that you don't want Jerusalem to be divided as any part of any peace plan. You didn't want Israel to withdraw from Gaza, and you don't want it to give up any territory in the West Bank. Why not?

Pastor HAGEE: Because the Bible has a very specific verse in Joel, the third chapter and the second verse that says almost verbatim what I'm going to quote to you based on which translation you will be reading, and the Bible says, that 'I the Lord will cause the nations to come down to the valley of Jehosaphat for judgment, and the reason that I'm going to judge the nations is because they have divided up my land and my heritage, the people of Israel.' So that verse very clearly says that any nation that forces Israel to divide up their land will experience the judgment of God.

GROSS: And what will happen during the Rapture?

Pastor HAGEE: What will happen during the Rapture is that Paul writes in the New Testament that in a moment in the twinkling of an eye the dead in Christ shall rise and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to be with the Lord in the air. That means instantaneously every believer will leave this earth.

GROSS: Now, most Christians who believe in the Rapture believe that the believers who will be raptured are Christian believers.

Pastor HAGEE: It's a misnomer for the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Catholics, the Pentecostals, the Methodists, whomever. I know when you hear their preachers preach, you get the idea they're the only ones going to heaven. That's one of the reasons I have a nondenominational church. I was raised in a denomination, and many times I heard the exploits of the denominations being touted more highly than the exploits of God himself, but there is no market on who's going to heaven, only God himself knows who those people are who are walking and living as they should.

GROSS: But everyone else who I've heard talk about the Rapture believes that it's Christian believers who will go to heaven. Jews, Muslims, nonbelievers will be left behind to face the tribulations on earth.

Pastor HAGEE: Well, there are Jewish people who believe in Jesus Christ, and there are Arabs who believe in Jesus Christ, so you don't have to be a gentile to be a believer.

GROSS: But you do have to believe in Jesus Christ.

Pastor HAGEE: Yes you do, to be a part of the Rapture.

GROSS: So where does that leave the Israeli Jews who don't believe in Jesus Christ when the Rapture comes?

Pastor HAGEE: Where that leaves them is that during the tribulation, the book of Revelation says in the 14th chapter that God is going to send angels who will preach the everlasting gospel across the face of the earth so that everyone will have the opportunity of knowing who Jesus Christ is. Now, when it comes to the Jewish people, Zechariah very clearly says that they are not going to believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah until they see him. Zechariah says in the 14th chapter 'and when they, the Jewish people, see him whom they have pierced'--and the word pierced there actually refers to his rib and side--'when they see him whom they have pierced, they will weep as one weeps for his only son for a period of one week. They're simply not going to believe he is the Messiah until they actually see him, and that's at the Second Coming. Then, at that point in time, there is the judgment of the nations in which all nations are judged for the way in which they have treated the nation of Israel and the Jewish people, and the Jewish people are front and center in the kingdom of God that will be an eternal kingdom.

GROSS: Now, your group, Christian Zionists for Israel, supports Israel, but your critics say that you don't really have Israel's best interest at heart because your agenda is the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ, and you believe that Christ's Second Coming is imminent, and when it happens, Jews will see the truth of that and will convert to Christianity. So again, your critics say that scenario does not have the best interests of the Jewish people or of Israel at heart. What would your response be to that?

Pastor HAGEE: My response is that they're mistaken. For 25 years I have been doing an event called A Night to Honor Israel, and the total purpose of the Night to Honor Israel is to bring Christians and Jews together in a municipal auditorium--now they meet at my church here in the city--and to present a message of hope, a message of appreciation from Christians to Jews for the Jewish contribution to Christianity, which I mentioned to you earlier. There is nothing said or done in that service that targets Jews for conversion or trying to bring them into the church, and the total purpose of the Night to Honor Israel is to raise funds to benefit orphans, to bring Jewish people from around the world to Israel who wish to immigrate to Israel, to help build absorption centers where the Jewish people coming from around the world can learn the Hebrew language and be taught a trade, the giving to hospitals and to organizations throughout the state of Israel that benefit the Jewish people. We have given millions of dollars over 25 years and brought over 12,000 people to Israel from the four corners of the earth who would not have gotten there. So people who say that our objective is not to help Israel are simply mistaken.

GROSS: You opposed the Roadmap for Peace which required land for peace. You've said that giving up the West Bank or part of Jerusalem violates the word of God. How does it?

Pastor HAGEE: Joel 3:2 says do not do it. Those who divide up the land of Israel will come under the judgment of God. Therefore, don't do it. It's just that simple.

GROSS: What about Israelis who want a practical solution to living in peace in the Middle East and who believe that land for peace might be a viable, perhaps the only really viable solution. Would you say you can't do that because of what the Bible says?

Pastor HAGEE: No. No. I'm not saying I'm forcing my beliefs on you. But look at it from a basic analysis of common intelligence. You only do something because it benefits you. You negotiate something because you get something from the negotiation. Show me one time in Israel's history in the past 58 years when giving land has brought them peace, and I'll say that they would have point in logic. But at this point in time, they've given away Jordan, they've given away the Sinai Peninsula, they have given away Gaza, they have backed out of Lebanon. It has benefited them not one iota. It hasn't brought them one day of peace. It has brought them nothing but additional military confrontation. And I am predicting on this telecast that the cease-fire that now exists will collapse and crumble as soon as Hamas and Hezbollah are re-armed from Iran through Syria and through Egypt, and the war will start again with more violence than we've ever seen in the Middle East, and principally because we've given these land bases away to become nothing but a base for global terrorism, 1,000 yards from the walls of Jerusalem.

GROSS: My guest is **John Hagee**, founder of Christians United for Israel. We'll talk more after a break. This is FRESH AIR.

(Announcements)

GROSS: If you're just joining us, my guest is Pastor **John Hagee**, the founder of Christians United for Israel. He believes the rebirth of Israel is a prelude to the Second Coming. Here's an excerpt of a sermon from Pastor Hagee's collection "Jerusalem: Countdown to Crisis."

(Soundbite from "Jerusalem: Countdown to Crisis" by Pastor **John Hagee**)

Pastor HAGEE: For those of you who are in Washington, Jerusalem is not up for negotiation with anyone for any reason at any time in the future, regardless of what your Roadmap of Peace calls for. There are people in this nation who still believe the Bible takes precedent over Washington, DC.

(End of soundbite)

GROSS: Pastor Hagee, if you believe that the Bible takes precedence over Washington, DC, I would assume maybe you'd think the Bible takes precedence over the Israeli government as well. If you use the Bible as the basis of policy, is there any room for compromise? And if you use the Bible as the basis for policy, then should Muslims be using the Quran as the basis of their policy? And again, what possible room for compromise is there at that point?

Pastor HAGEE: There's really no room for compromise between radical Islam and...

GROSS: I'm not talking about radical Islam. I'm just talking about Islam in general.

Pastor HAGEE: Well, Islam in general, those who live by the Quran have a scriptural mandate to kill Christians and Jews. Now, I had an Islamic on my television show last week. His name was Walid Shoebat. He was raised as a Palestinian terrorist and, at one time, was--placed a bomb and was supposed to walk into a bank. And I said, 'Walid, I'm trying to understand the definition of what is a radical Islamic person because I've read many books, many magazines and I can't come up with a good definition of what constitutes a radical Islamic.' And he says these words, and I'll quote them, he said, 'Anyone who truly believes the Quran is willing to kill Christians or Jews. That's waging jihad.' He said now, 'Those people who are willing to go into another country and start a war will only be about 15 to 20 percent of Islam.'

There are 1.3 billion people who follow the Islamic faith, so if you're saying there's only 15 percent that want to come to America or invade Israel to crush it, you're only talking about 200 million people. That's far more than Hitler and Japan and Italy and all of the axis powers in World War II had under arms. That is a massive number of people. So while we may define radical Islam as a minority, because there are so many, it is still an overpowering military potential.

GROSS: But what you said is that all Muslims have a mandate to kill Christians and Jews. Do you believe

that?

Pastor HAGEE: Well, the Quran teaches that. Yes, it teaches that very clearly.

GROSS: So, for you, there's absolutely no way of tolerating Islam at all. I'm not talking about extreme Islam. I'm just talking about the Muslim religion.

Pastor HAGEE: No, there are Islamics who want peace, but they don't have center stage right now. And whenever Islam, radical Islam, does things that make the headlines, like getting on a bus with a bomb strapped around them and killing people, the moderates do not speak up because they're afraid that they will be killed by the radicals. So it gives the appearance that there are no--there is--there are no moderate Islamic people. I've been to Israel 21 times. I've gone to visit Islamic people who I consider to be peaceful. They want peace as much as I do, and they're terrified. The particular businessman that I talked to has sent his five children to California because he's afraid that he will be burned out of his business because he's not extreme enough. And he asked me if I would pray with him, but would I please come into his office, shut the door, and put the blind down before I did so because he's afraid of being seen in any kind of association with a Christian. Now, that's not what you call an environment of tranquility.

GROSS: Are there wars in the Middle East prophesied in the Bible, do you think, before the Rapture and the Second Coming?

Pastor HAGEE: The Bible makes a very general statement that there will be wars and rumors of wars, and then, in another instance, it refers to the wars as being like a woman who is in the process of having a baby. In other words, where the contracts begin and once the contractions begin in these series of wars, just as in having a baby, the contractions become more severe until the baby is born, so will the contractions--so will these military wars become more severe before the end of the age. So I believe that we have entered into this point of time and where there will be one war that follows another and each one of them will be more severe than the other until we finally reach the battle of Armageddon, where there is a massive military entourage fighting for global supremacy in the Middle East.

GROSS: Did the war between Israel and Hezbollah fit into those contractions that you were talking about?

Pastor HAGEE: I'd certainly say yes to that. I certainly do, and I believe that they are going to continue. As I said earlier, I am absolutely sure that this cease-fire will fail, and then, in a matter of months, they'll be back at war. As soon as Iran re-arms Hezbollah and re-arms Hamas, they will come after Israel one more time.

GROSS: My guest is **John Hagee**, founder of Christians United for Israel. We'll talk more after a break. This is FRESH AIR.

(Announcements)

GROSS: If you're just joining us, my guest is pastor **John Hagee**. He's the founder of Christians United for Israel.

How much influence do you think your group has now within the Bush administration or in Congress?

Pastor HAGEE: Well, let me say that we organized on February the 7th of this year, and we met together with 400 leading evangelicals that I invited from across the nation to come to Cornerstone Church, and we wanted, together, to establish that Israel needed for the Christians of America to speak with one voice, to speak very clearly, to speak intelligently and to speak decisively. And so we organized and went to Washington for the first time July the 18th and 19th, just five short months after we organized, and we took 3500 people with us. And actually 3700 people came, but we didn't have room for them. They just came, quote, "in faith" that they could find a chair. But the next day we went to Congress and we met with senators and we met with congressmen, and we told them that the Christians of America were coming together in an organized fashion to speak with one voice, that they would be coming back from year to year, and that we would be coming back to express our concerns on behalf of the state of Israel. They were quite glad to receive us. They were surprised that we came--so many of us came, but they very gladly received us.

GROSS: Would you like to convince American Christian groups that Israel should be a more important part of their agenda?

Pastor HAGEE: I would like to convince American Christians that they have Bible mandate to support Israel, to pray for Israel, to speak up for the peace of Israel, to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and to be a blessing to the Jewish people because that is the biblical mandate that we have. We may have a political difference with the prime minister, and I have made this very clear to Prime Minister Olmert. I wrote him a letter shortly after he was elected and wished him well and told him that he would be in my prayers and my thoughts, and I wished him every success and this was before the war began. But I said in that letter very

specifically that 'I must disagree with your policy of giving land away to the terrorists organizations,' and he has a political philosophy that disagrees with the biblical position that we have, and we'll just agree to disagree. But meantime, we're going forward, we're doing everything that we can to benefit the people of Israel, to bless the people of Israel, because they are, in fact, the nation.

GROSS: I just want to ask you one question based on one of your sermons that--and this isn't about Israel. You said after Hurricane Katrina that it was an act of God, and you said "when you violate God's will long enough, the judgment of God comes to you. Katrina is an act of God for a society that is becoming Sodom and Gomorrah reborn." Do you still think that Katrina is punishment from God for a society that's becoming like Sodom and Gomorrah?

Pastor HAGEE: All hurricanes are acts of God because God controls the heavens. I believe that New Orleans had a level of sin that was offensive to God, and they are--were recipients of the judgment of God for that. The newspaper carried the story in our local area that was not carried nationally that there was to be a homosexual parade on the Monday that the Katrina came, and the promise of that parade was that it was going to reach a level of sexuality never demonstrated before in any of the other Gay Pride parades. So I believe that the judgment of God is a very real thing. I know that there are people who demure from that, but I believe that the Bible teaches that when you violate the law of God, that God brings punishment sometimes before the day of judgment, and I believe that the Hurricane Katrina was, in fact, the judgment of God against the city of New Orleans.

GROSS: So I know you're very opposed to homosexuality, but you think that the whole city was punished because of things like the forthcoming Gay Pride parade.

Pastor HAGEE: This is true. All of the city was punished because of the sin that happened there in that city.

GROSS: You said that we could get raptured any second. In one of your sermons you basically said we could get raptured before this sermon is even over. What are you doing to prepare?

Pastor HAGEE: I'm doing what I do every day. I live right. I read the Bible. I pray. I try to treat other people like I would like to be treated. And I'm going to leave the rest to the grace of God.

GROSS: And do you still believe it's imminent?

Pastor HAGEE: Oh, I do. I do. I do, I do.

GROSS: And my imminent, any second? Any moment?

Pastor HAGEE: I would not be at all surprised if I saw the Lord before the day ended today, but if he doesn't come today, 10 years from now I'll be looking for him with the same intensity.

GROSS: Pastor Hagee, thank you very much for talking with us.

Pastor HAGEE: Thank you, Terry. Thank you for the opportunity.

GROSS: **John Hagee** is founder of Christians United for Israel and the pastor of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. Earlier in the show we talked about Christian Zionism with two journalists critical of the movement, Gershom Gorenberg and Max Blumenthal.

(Credits)

GROSS: I'm Terry Gross.

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