



United for Israel

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By Dave Sorter

Ever see a hora break out spontaneously on a church floor — twice? Did you ever think a (female) fiddler on the roof could transform into a veritable Charlie Daniels beating down that devil visiting Georgia?

More importantly, would it warm the Jewish soul to hear a Christian apologize for her religion's apathy during the Holocaust and its "waking up to the debt it owes the Jewish people," in the words of Eagle Mountain International Church Pastor Terri Copeland Pearsons?

All of that happened Sunday night during the second Night to Honor Israel at Eagle Mountain International Church in Newark, just north of Fort Worth. About 60 members of the Dallas Jewish community rode a bus to the event from the Aaron Family JCC, and more than 130 people gave RSVPs, according to Karen Garfield, southwestern region executive director for Israel Bonds, one of the Jewish organizations supporting the evening.

The unifying message was the state of Israel and the shared passion among Christians and Jews that Israel is on God-given land and must continue to be able to defend itself.

And, that Christians are beginning to realize that "replacement theory," which basically states that the New Testament replaces the Hebrew Scriptures, isn't valid.

"We accept the Torah as the word of God," said Pastor John C. Hagee, founder and chairman of Christians United for Israel, during a taped message Sunday night.

In fact, the name Jesus Christ was uttered from the pulpit just once at the event, in relation to his Judaism.

"This is a family reunion," Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger of the Jewish Studies Initiative said during his invocation. "For 2,000 years, children of the same God have been separated. And, to Christians, you have come back to embrace your older brothers."



Partnership 2Gether international chairman Harold Gernsbacher, third from left, and Alan Engle, U.S. representative for Western Galilee Hospital, fourth from left, accept a check for \$130,000 raised during the Night to Honor Israel event held Sunday night at Eagle Mountain International Church. Pastors George and Terri Pearsons of the church are on the right. | Photos: Dave Sorter

The evening was also financially successful, raising \$200,000 for three Israeli non-profit organizations. The Western Galilee Hospital received \$130,000, while Israel La'ad, which distributes food baskets to the needy in Israel, and Larger Than Life, which supports Israeli children with cancer and their families, received \$35,000 each.

Christians United for Israel, in which Pearsons and her husband and co-pastor, George Pearsons, are heavily involved, was prominent during the evening. Terri Pearsons and CUI executive director David Brog, who is Jewish, were keynote speakers, and Sam Bain, state chairman of the Ohio College Republican Federation, also spoke.

Bain said his organization has been debunking myths that he believes have been perpetrated by university professors.

"The classroom affects the agenda of the U.S. government," Bain said. "We need to tear down the premise that Israel is occupying a land it does not own. Israel has a God-given right to exist that cannot be taken away."

He followed with the most political phrase of the evening.

"Whether it's governments like Iran, professors in the classroom or elected officials who say Israel needed to go back to the pre-1967 borders, we will defeat them."

Maya Kadosh, the Houston-based deputy counsel general to Israel in the Southwest, said she had a ready answer for those who believe Israel lies on stolen land.



Bernie Appel of Fort Worth sings “Shalom Aleichem” during a musical portion of the Night to Honor Israel.

“That was answered long ago,” she said. “Genesis, Chapter 35. Verse 12. ‘The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I give to you and your descendants.’”

Brog, once named one of *The Forward’s* 50 most influential Jews, said that supporting Israel is not only the right thing to do, but it is in the United States’ best interests, especially given the threat that a nuclear Iran could pose.

“Israel is fighting our shared enemies,” Brog said. “When Israel points over the horizon at the nuclear threat of Iran, it also points to the No. 1 threat to the United States of America. How many allies fight shared enemies on our behalf? Israel does, and it does it for us.”

Brog went on to demonstrate that the argument that terrorists hate the U.S. only because it supports Israel is, in his words, “ridiculous” — the Muslim Brotherhood considered America a threat to Islamic culture 20 years before Israel was established, he said, and Iranian Muslims hated the U.S. because of its support for the Shah of Iran in the 1950s.

“Our support of Israel is an example to be replicated, not a mistake to be eliminated,” Brog said. He added that while the United States have spent trillions of dollars and lost thousands of lives trying to create “new Israels” in Iraq and Afghanistan, nothing has come of it — while Israel continues its fight of shared enemies with \$3 billion of U.S. aid per year and no loss of American lives.



A group dances the hora during the Night to Honor Israel Sunday at Eagle Mountain International Church.

The evening featured music from the EMIC band, including a rowdy version of “Shalom Aleichem” that had Christians and Jews alike — waving U.S. and Israeli flags — dancing the hora.

After Brog spoke, band member Melissa Spangler played a moving “Hava Negillah” on the violin that combusted into another hora and some fast fiddle runs that would have had the devil escape Georgia and head back to Iran.

There were some touching moments, such as the standing ovation given to the few Holocaust survivors present, which prompted Terri Pearsons to say the following:

“I want to apologize for Christians who stood by during the Holocaust and let things happen. We declare to you, never again.”

Pearsons also thanks the Jewish religion, as that “older brother,” for giving her the opportunity as a “Zionist Christian” and descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to devote her life to God.

“If Abraham were here, I’d say thank you,” she said. “If Isaac and Jacob were here, I’d say you are our honored guests for the rest of your life. They’re not here, but their kids are.”