





THE NON- JEWISH AIPAC

**A PHILO-SEMITIC
CHRISTIAN
ORGANIZATION
HELPS ENSURE
THE SAFETY OF
JEWS AND THE
PEOPLE
OF ISRAEL**

**BY
RABBI YAAROV MENKEN**

T

his past Wednesday, August 12, the members of Congregation Rodfei Sholom, an Orthodox congregation of 300 families in San Antonio, Texas,

woke up to a disturbing surprise. Anti-Semitic and racist graffiti and vandalism had defaced cars and buildings surrounding the *shul*.

“This is not the San Antonio community,” averred Rav Aryeh Scheinberg, who has served the congregation for 45 years. “The religious community, the civic community, the law enforcement community have all been terrific.”

believe it unlikely that any organized hate group was involved. Nonetheless, Pastor Hagee was happy to send a message: “If a line has to be drawn, draw it around Christians and Jews. We are united.”

Pastor Hagee was not alone in his concern for Rav Scheinberg and his congregation. Gary Bauer, a Southern Baptist, domestic policy adviser to Ronald Reagan and a past presidential candidate, shaken, called Rav Scheinberg. Author and pastor Victor Styrsky sent a text message, reluctant to call and disturb the rabbi during that busy time.

What do Pastor Hagee, Gary Bauer and Pastor Styrsky share in common, besides their evangelical Christian faith? They are key officers of an organization founded by Pastor Hagee over ten years ago: Christians United for Israel.

Then-GOP presidential hopeful, Sen. John McCain, R-AZ, speaks at a news conference with Rev. John Hagee.



CHRISTIANS UNITED FOR ISRAEL

A long-time supporter of Israel and the Jewish people, Pastor Hagee was outraged when, in 1981, the world condemned Israel for denying Saddam Hussein nuclear weapons. As the Pastor of a “megachurch” with over 20,000 members, plus tens of millions of viewers on television, he knew that he could make a powerful statement of support. So he planned a one-time event, A Night to Honor Israel, to be held at his church.

When he shared his plans with the Jewish Federation of San Antonio, though, he encountered suspicion—at which point Rav Scheinberg became Pastor Hagee’s unlikely advocate. He asked his colleagues at a Federation meeting, “But what if he’s a good person?” And thus Pastor Hagee’s involvement and support of the Jewish community, and his personal friendship with Rav Scheinberg, grew as one.

Once the event was announced, Pastor Hagee received death threats, as well as a bomb threat against the church. “Don’t threaten to shoot me,” he warns, only partly in jest. “That really stimulates me.” The one-time event became both an annual and national celebration: The 34th Annual

Yet Rav Scheinberg reserved special praise for the response of one particular close friend and supporter: Pastor John Hagee, founder and senior pastor of the nearby Cornerstone Church. As soon as Pastor Hagee learned what had happened, he dropped his busy schedule, and he and his wife came to join Rav Scheinberg for two hours at the *shul*.

The investigation is ongoing; officers

The racist graffiti found on and near shul property in San Antonio, Texas.



Night to Honor Israel will take place this year, with similar annual events in almost every major city in the United States.

Ten years ago, Hagee decided to take matters a step further. He assembled 400 evangelical leaders for a special meeting: leading ministers, evangelical TV executives and presidents of Christian universities. In his words, “If you would’ve set off a bomb in that building, you would’ve set the evangelical church back 100 years.”

At that meeting, he shared his idea for an evangelical organization to stand behind Israel and the Jewish people. He asked the participants to join him. These leaders, “people not accustomed to being led,” as Hagee put it, “raised their hands as if drawn by a single string.” They hired a Harvard-trained Jewish lawyer named David Brog as executive director, and Christians United for Israel was born.

Since then, CUFI has conducted an annual summit in Washington, DC, to inform Christians about the dangers facing Israel and the Jewish community, declare their support and to lobby Congress. This year I attended. It was a fascinating experience.

The sole item on the agenda was to encourage congressional votes against a possible agreement with Iran. As *hash-*

**“THEY
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YISRAEL.”
-RAV
SCHEINBERG**

gachah would have it, the agreement was announced early in the morning of Tuesday, July 14, the day CUFI members were already scheduled to go meet their senators and representatives on Capitol Hill and advocate against it.

B'TORAS NES

Pastor John Hagee says that he backs Israel and the Jewish people “because it is simply the right thing to do. Standing with Israel is not a political issue; it’s a Bible issue.”

Rav Scheinberg understands that a statement like that leaves us wondering if we need to test our hearing. He recalls that the author Chaim Potok was once asked why Jews react so strongly to criticism from Christians, and responded that we have a “2,000-year flinch.” Pastor Hagee acknowledges that Jews were persecuted and murdered by Christians: “We cannot change this history, but we must learn from it.”

“Although we say *‘Ein chadash tachas hashemesh,*” notes Rav Scheinberg, “this is something we have not seen in the history of Jews and Christians. It is *B'Toras nes* and could not come at a more opportune time.” Similarly, a member of the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah* said that it is a *nes min hashamayim* that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* would bring a group into the world to defend Jewish interests.

Rav Scheinberg suggests that the existence of CUFI should strengthen our *emunah*. “They understand *morashah* as a permanent inheritance,” he said. “They acknowledge G-d’s covenant with *am Yisrael*, and they say it loudly, clearly and unequivocally. It makes a tremendous *roshem*.”

THE CUFI PHILOSOPHY

An affinity for the Jewish nation drives all of CUFI’s activities. Their communications director, Ari Morgenstern, is as Jewish as his name suggests; he previously served as press officer for the Israeli Embassy in Washington. After I expressed surprise at the warmth towards Jews expressed by CUFI members, he told me that this reaction is far from unusual. When someone from the Jewish community or the media first experiences the annual CUFI Summit, he said, “they are blown away. They realize just how genuine and impassioned Christian support for Israel across this country really is.”

According to Pastor Hagee and others, their enthusiasm stems directly from belief in the words of our Torah. To them, G-d’s Covenant with Avraham Avinu and the Jewish people is eternal, and blessings come to all nations through the Jews, exactly as



Republican presidential candidate, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee speaks at the Christians United for Israel summit.



G-d promised Avraham in *Parshas Lech Lecha*: “I will bless those that bless you, and curse those that curse you, and through you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” [*Bereishis* 12:3]. As Bishop Keith Butler declared at the podium during the summit: “The Hand of G-d is on the Jewish people. Those who ‘plug in’—the Hand of G-d will be on them too.”

For this reason, Hagee regards blessing Israel as critical for America. “The day the United States turns its back on Israel is the day G-d turns his back on the United States,” he says. “Where are the nations that persecuted the Jewish people?” he asks. “Where is Pharaoh and his army, the Babylonians, the ancient Romans and Greeks, the Ottomans and the Nazis? These empires are located in the boneyard of human history.”

Presidential candidate Mike Huckabee, speaking at the summit, said, “Jewish friends ask why we are so enthusiastic. I tell them that it’s possible to be a good Jew and have nothing to do with Christians. But it’s not possible to be a Christian and have nothing to do with Jews.” A younger attendee, Uriah Ellis, explained to me that support of Israel and Jews is “a key doctrinal issue, such that one might select a church based upon whether the leadership shares that belief,” and that the clear majority of evangelical churches are pro-Israel.

DWELLING WITH LAMBS

Bauer, like his colleagues, recognizes and is even sympathetic towards Jewish reluctance to take evangelical Christian support at face value. With calculated understatement, he reflected that “there’s not a great history here. And there’s still a feeling that there’s some sort of hidden agenda, that this is all wrapped up in some obscure prophetic text.”

Perhaps the most common suspicion regarding evangelical support is that it stems from their belief that the Jews must move to Israel before the “Second Coming” can occur. Pastor Styrsky, who

has spoken for AIPAC, the ZOA and other Jewish groups, has heard this many times. His answer: “I only learned I ‘believed’ that when my Jewish friends told me!”

I felt an obvious sincerity in Pastor Styrsky’s desire to change the relationship between Christians and Jews. As the Eastern Regional Coordinator of CUFI, kindness to the Jewish Nation is a personal mission. In his words, he had been “hanging out at AIPAC for years, trying to figure out how to overcome the horror of how Christians treated Jews in the past” when Pastor Hagee called for organizing CUFI.

He is proud to study Judaism with a local Chabad rabbi, who assigned him a Hebrew name: Velvel. “Velvel is a strong name, a good name,” said the rabbi. “It is Yiddish for wolf!” But Pastor Styrsky was reminded of the parable of a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” found in their texts.

Reflecting upon it later, he realized that perhaps the name fit, after all. “You are Velvel. You are the wolf. For almost two millennia you have been a ravishing wolf to My lambs, the Jewish people and in these days of *Moshiach* you are learning to lie down with My lambs. You are Velvel.” This, he said, is the “heart” of CUFI: “It’s not a kinder, gentler Christianity; it’s what we were always supposed to be.”

In fact, Pastor Styrsky’s book, *Honest to G-d: The 10 Questions Jews Ask Christian Zionists*, is so compassionate, filled with sadness over the past mistreatment of Jews by Christians and devoid of any message about proselytizing to us, that it earned a sharply critical review from the J4J missionary organization. As much as bitter experience demands that we look for ulterior motives, that says a great deal. Pastor Hagee is similarly condemned by others in the Christian world, because neither one of them believes that Jews need to convert. CUFI speakers exhort Christian audiences to simply love and bless Israel, without a hint of what we have come to expect.

JEWES AT THE CUFI SUMMIT

The CUFI Summit, is huge, professionally run and filled with Southern hospitality. Oh, and a healthy sprinkling of yarmulkes. The people behind the information, registration and “special needs”

desks are anxious to help and to be sure you get your kosher meal ticket. Once I found my way to the main concourse, I spotted yarmulkes—and *Yidden* congregating. It's a Jewish thing.

The Christian attendees are excited to talk to you, and respectful. As one *shul rav* quipped, "It's one of the few places I get *kavod harav!*" Many attendees were excited to share how and why they support Israel, fight BDS, the boycott, divestment and sanction movement or simply support their local Jewish communities. A woman in a wheelchair gave me her blessings as I walked by, and was delighted that I paused to encourage her.

The *rav* wasn't joking. As Jewish attendees, we found ourselves treated as honored guests. We were automatically counted among the VIPs invited to the Donor Appreciation Banquet (and provided with kosher food) at the end of the conference; others had to give \$1,000 or more to attend. "Jewish attendance gives Hagee strength," said one *askan*. "He's *makir tov* that we're coming." Since the first summit, there have been three daily *minyanim*—those being, in fact, the only prayer services at CUFI.

Over the years, John Hagee Ministries has given tens of millions (its website sets the number at \$85 million) to charitable causes in Israel. "Ninety-five percent of it is given to people to whom we would write a check without even a discussion," said my source. The other five percent? "Laniado Hospital, Shaare Zedek Medical Center, Magen David Adom and Nefesh B'Nefesh have all received Hagee's assistance."

Speakers at the CUFI summit fell into two major groups: evangelicals, primarily pastors, talking about how important the Jews are; and experts, most of whom were Jewish, talking about Israel and its security needs. Brog, the Jewish executive of this Christian organization, fell somewhere in the middle; though originally from New Jersey, he thundered from the podium about the Iran deal being an "errah" of historic proportions.

And then there was a declaration of gratitude. Speaking to the assembled at CUFI's "Night to Honor Israel," talk-show host and columnist Dennis Prager revealed that, as the child of Holocaust survivors, he always wonders who around him would be one of the righteous Gentiles. "When I'm with you," he said, "I know I'm with 6,000 people who would hide me." And after they stood with thundering applause, he added: "And I wish every Jew in America and around the world could see how you reacted when I said that."

THE GENTILES' LAMENTATION

From the beginning, Pastor Hagee insisted that CUFI and the Night to Honor Israel be "nonconversionary." There's not a word about proselytizing; attendees are far less concerned with Jewish rejection of their religious founder than they are with the fact that the Jewish people brought him about in the first place. Without Torah and the Jewish people, there would be no "first family of Christianity." Pastor Happy Caldwell of the Agape Church of Little Rock, Arkansas, described placing his hand on the Western Wall and immediately sensing the presence of G-d. "G-d has never left His people," he announced, as people stood and applauded. "G-d has never left His nation.... The church did not replace Israel; the church is to bless Israel."

Several years ago, CUFI made a scheduling error. Their Night to Honor Israel at the summit was to take place on the evening

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Pastor John Hagee (l.), and
Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg of
Congregation Rodfei Sholom
in San Antonio, Texas

of *Tishah B'Av*. By the time this was pointed out, it was too late to reschedule the CUFI summit, but that major event to honor Israel was delayed by one night to enable observant Jewish guests to come. Thus it happened that on the evening of *Tishah B'Av*, observant Jews at the summit exited early, went to a different room, and began to pray.

They were not expecting Pastor Hagee to conclude the night's events by announcing from the podium that their Jewish guests had gone to lament for the destruction of the Temple, and that he was going to join them. That is how then-Ambassador Michael Oren and 1,200 non-Jews entered the spacious room, separated by gender, and sat on the floor to listen to *Eichah*. According to one of those present that evening, "You could have heard a pin drop through the entire reading, and several of the Christians were even crying."

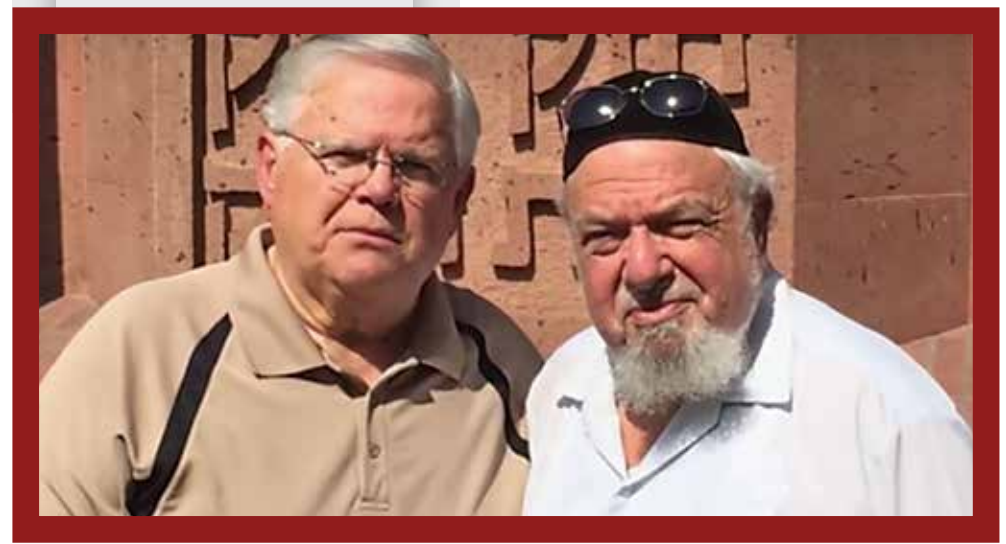
FIGHTING FOR ISRAEL AND JEWISH INTERESTS

Fighting hatred of Jews is a key element of CUFI's mission. CUFI, which operates offices in Canada and several other English-speaking countries, recently opened an office in the United Kingdom specifically to combat the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe.

Israel's security, though, is their primary focus. As today's anti-Semites hide behind an "anti-Israel" cover, CUFI supports Israel as the defender of *Eretz Yisrael*, the homeland of the Jews, a place Jews should call their own and live in peace and security.

At the most recent summit, CUFI unveiled the CUFI Action Fund, to be based in Washington, DC, and directed by Gary Bauer. Despite his extensive résumé of religious and public service, Bauer told me that his greatest feeling of accomplishment comes from working on the "alliance between Christians and Jews in defense of Judeo-Christian civilization."

As the lobbying arm of CUFI, the CUFI Action Fund arrived at the perfect time to



work against the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" agreement with Iran in the US Congress. "When I look at what the president said were our goals, and what the Iranians actually gave up," Bauer observes, "this is the worst diplomatic defeat for the West since Munich." But that's not what he finds most disturbing about the agreement. Rather, "Iran periodically denies the first Holocaust while they promise a second. The fact that a US president and the Europeans—of all people, given their history—can sit at a negotiating table for over two years with Iranian leaders and not once walk out in disgust in reaction to calls for genocide, and now has signed a deal that puts European economic interests ahead of the existence of the Jewish nation is obscene."

Bauer is proud of their accomplishments during their first few weeks: "Our purpose at CUFI Action Fund is to lobby, and as we speak, we are pouring hundreds of thousands of emails and thousands of phone calls into congressional offices. I've had a few complaints this week telling me that the number of calls were preventing them from doing business."

As an experienced political lobbyist and former government official, Bauer now leads a large team of volunteers increasing support for Israel. "We are monitoring the announcements by congressional offices regarding when they are having Town Hall meetings, when citizens will be able to meet with their representatives back home during the August recess. At one meeting with 70 constituents by a congressman in Connecticut, 69 were people we brought in to oppose the deal. We made them aware of the time and place of the meeting, and provided

them with simple talking points so that they could speak in an articulate way about the flaws in the deal. That congressman got a very strong message," he concluded.

CHANGING THE LAW TO SUPPORT ISRAEL

Attorney Alan Clemmons has served South Carolina's 107th District in the State House of Representatives since 2003. A devout Mormon and CUFI member, Clemmons traces his bond to Israel and the Jewish community to "Bible stories learned while on my mother's knee. I come from a part of the country where faith takes a number one position in your life; my faith would never have come about without the Jewish people and the Jewish faith."

At least in South Carolina, support for Israel and Jews is apolitical, Clemmons told me. In his words, supporting Israel "transcends party and race. It's a matter of American patriotism." Thanks to his efforts, "South Carolina Stands with Israel" is an approved vanity license plate available through the state DMV.

The anti-Israel (and anti-Semitic) Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement caught his attention in 2011, and he was offended. "Discriminatory boycotts have historically been used as a form of economic warfare to forward the purposes of hatred and bigotry," he explained. "Like the 1936 boycotts, it's insidious. From the first moment it struck me as another way to express distrust of Jews."

Rep. Clemmons researched the issue and proved that the BDS movement injures the economy of South Carolina. A. L. Solutions,



an Ashdod-based manufacturing company with a facility in Spartanburg, was forced to close its European office due to anti-Israel bias, harming its international growth.

With this evidence in hand, Clemmons drafted H. 3583, a bill prohibiting the State of South Carolina from doing business with any company “which engages in a boycott of any person or entity based upon race, color, religion, gender or national origin.” It passed the House 97-1, sailed through the State Senate 44-0, and was recently signed into law by Governor Nikki Haley.

Clemmons would like to see this model replicated across the country, and Pastor Hagee strongly agrees. “We will boycott the boycotters,” he declared. “If the boycotters of Israel want to play hardball, game on. We will show you how.”

THE NEXT GENERATION

When Chelsea Andrews of Indiana went off to college, she didn’t plan on becoming either a Christian or a pro-Israel activist. But at Liberty University the first was easy, and the offer of a free trip to Washington made Andrews, with her strong interest in politics and government, sign up for CUFI.

Three years later, she was selected to go to Israel on a college Zionist mission. At that point, she said, “something conceptual became something personal.” Besides one other CUFI member and one Mormon from AIPAC, the rest of the 20 students were Jewish—the first Jews she’d ever met. Beyond her understanding of the unfair treatment of Israel, she came to know and appreciate Jewish customs. She describes Shabbos as “kind of like Thanksgiving, but you get to do it every week.”

Back in the States and well into the next school year, she got a request from a CUFI colleague, Lydia Williams. The University of California, Davis, student government was poised to call upon the university to divest from Israel. Knowing it was a lost cause, Williams and the other pro-Israel students planned a walkout during the stu-

dent council meeting.

Andrews was watching the live stream of the meeting, and when Williams and her friends left the room she was horrified: Students yelled *Allahu akbar* at their backs, like jihadis closing in for murder. Shortly thereafter, the Jewish fraternity at UC Davis was graffitied with swastikas.

She was motivated to act, but knew that Liberty, an evangelist Christian university, was an unlikely place for BDS to become an issue. After a bit of thought, she realized that she could ensure it never would, and make a national statement. Andrews, as class president, drafted, championed and passed an amendment to the Student Government Association Constitution prohibiting the SGA from entertaining any bill or resolution pertaining to BDS.

Andrews recently toured the Middle East (after a stop at Auschwitz) as part of a Christian group, learning about systematic oppression of Christians under ISIS and in many Muslim countries, and about religious liberty in Israel. Taking up her new post as a key staff person at the CUFI Action Fund, she plans to make a career of activism and advocacy for Israel and the Jewish people.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

To put things in perspective, AIPAC, the largest Jewish pro-Israel organization, has over 100,000 members. CUFI has over 2.4 million; *The Washington Post* acknowledged it as the “largest and most dependable” pro-Israel group. And as AIPAC claims to represent the views of six million Jews, CUFI claims to represent over 80 million

evangelical Christians. After experiencing a gathering like the CUFI summit, it’s easy to be swept up in their enthusiasm.

Several *askanim*, however, advocate the need for continued *hishtadlus* within CUFI and the evangelical Christian community. First of all, some theological positions touted by CUFI are rejected by other evangelicals, so that some in the latter group have turned against Israel as part of the battle.

Beyond that, the same Palestinian activists who persuaded the Presbyterian Church (USA) and smaller church organizations to join BDS have now set their sights on the much larger evangelical community. “People in CUFI,” one expert explained, “are particularly vulnerable to emotional arguments.”

David Walker, coordinator of CUFI on Campus, acknowledged that student activists need information and support. In particular, he described Jewish supporters of BDS as “the three-headed monster” for a CUFI member defending Israel. Andrews agreed: “Jewish support for BDS nullifies our entire argument,” she said.

Frum Jews, those whose religious devotion and values resonate with evangelical Christians, are perhaps best suited to counter the lies coming from anti-Israel activists with facts and arguments, if done under the guidance of *gedolim*. “This isn’t for everybody,” said another attendee. “You’ve got to ask a *sh’eilah*, and there’s got to be a reason, not *stam* to be curious.” Yet he feels Jewish attendance combines simple *hakaras hatov* with recognition that we need and value their friendship.

Bauer believes that the more Christians know about the Middle East and Jewish history, the more they will support Israel and the Jewish community. “The events that are happening and that will surely continue to happen, will continue to drive us together,” he said. “The realization will grow that if we don’t stand together, we risk the world sinking into another Dark Age.” ●



Q&A *with* Rav Aryeh Scheinberg

Rav Aryeh Scheinberg was raised in New York City, where he studied in RIETS, Chaim Berlin and the Gur Aryeh Kollel. He moved to San Antonio, Texas, in 1970, to become the rav of Congregation Rodfei Shalom. He is a member of the RCA and Hisachdus HaRabbanim.

Due to his relationship with Pastor John Hagee, Rav Scheinberg has helped facilitate the enormous support for Israel that the pastor and his organization provide. Numerous Jewish figures, from *rabbanim* to politicians, have stayed in Rav Scheinberg's home when traveling to San Antonio to meet with Hagee.

How long have you known Pastor John Hagee?

We have a 34-year relationship, a 34-year friendship.

That is when he decided to run a Night to Honor Israel. Did you know him before then?

We had only met once prior, at a community event. We began to share time together when the Night to Honor Israel was emerging in response to criticism of Israel. He wanted to promote the wonderful favor that Israel did for the free world in bombing the Osirak nuclear reactor [in Iraq]. And we began to speak with each other on an ongoing basis.

Did you have conversations about his idea before suggesting to the Federation that they should talk with him?

Yes, I had heard him out myself. My feeling was not based on discussion with others or extensive research, just the feeling that you get about a person when you meet him.

In the first years, until people learned to trust him and believe that he had no proselytizing agenda, and that he was what he said he would be, I had to represent him to different communities, to different Jewish leaders. I gave them my per-

sonal testimony, if you will, of his sincerity, the authenticity of his support for *Yidden* and desire to help Eretz Yisrael.

After a while, he became a known commodity. People in the national Jewish leadership came to recognize his idealism and altruism. So my role became less intense, less constant in the need to represent him to others.

I still say I'm a gatekeeper and advisor, because there are people always trying to reach him. He has to know who he needs to see. He relies on my advice and the advice of some others.

It's an unlikely alliance.

The whole movement is "unlikely," but it's happening. It's happening and it is something that has to be *Yad Hashem. Mei'ayin yavo ezri*. CUFI is a growing force for political advocacy at a time when we have no friends in the world outside North America.

Non-*frum* Jews need them in another way, also: their belief in Scripture. They say, "Eretz Yisrael belongs to you because the Torah says so." We don't believe their Bible, but they believe ours. We should hope that non-*frum* Jews will think about what he's saying.

He's a person, obviously, of power. He has strong, passionate beliefs. And he's a visionary. He's not politically correct. He acts based on what he thinks G-d wants, which is consistent in most areas of political and social life with what an Orthodox Jew should want.

What about the obvious religious chasm?

We're both aware of that; obviously we all think of our own *acharis hayamim*. But when we open *The Wall Street Journal* and look at the political scene, we don't think about the end of days, but what is going to happen today or tomorrow. We have so many issues that we need to be active about now.

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Why should we talk about the end of days when we have such concern about next week, or next month? When we have such concern about Iran and the well-being of the United States, are we growing stronger or weaker—there are just so many issues of the survival and security of the present that eschatological discussions are a luxury.

But *sof kol sof*, doesn't he believe you need to accept their religious founder to go to Heaven?

He has already worked that out, and gone on record saying that that's not the case, that Torah-true Jews will have a "special grace." Bottom line, he does not believe that our salvation depends upon a change of faith.

How do you view his personal interactions with the Jewish community?

I've seen him in very sensitive, tender moments. I've seen him with genuine tears at Yad Vashem. I've seen him being courteous to an elderly person who came to him when thousands were waiting.

I've seen his sensitivity to my needs, to Orthodox needs. Whenever there is any event, he's concerned about *kashrus*. Whenever I go with him, or any event where there are going to be Jews, there's going to be a kosher meal. Even for Jews who haven't seen a kosher meal in a long time.

He visited Jonathan Pollard in jail when few paid attention to his case. He sat in jail with Pollard for three or four hours.

I viewed him as a visionary doing epic things, changing the feelings of Christians for Jews. And then I saw the lengths to which he was prepared to go to encourage and diminish the pain of a single *Yid*.

Whenever we go to Eretz Yisrael together, we stop at the Kotel and pray for each other's well-being, as well as for Eretz Yisrael and *klal Yisrael*.

Why did he come to Rodfei Shalom after the vandalism?

There was no agenda; he didn't know the media would be here. He came to ask what he can do, and how they can help—to be *mechazek* by standing with us. He conveyed the feeling that we are family. He supported our building campaign in 2007, and even told me that we didn't need to recognize it—though we did, putting his name on the board room, where we meet. But he responded Wednesday as if it were his own church that had been attacked.

It's clear that he cares about the entire Jewish community, but has a special relationship with you.

He has often said publicly that I'm the closest of all his friends among the clergy, Christian and otherwise. We'll talk about things of a personal nature that may not be a topic of conversation with others. If there's an issue that is vexing or troubling to him, he will call and ask for my prayers.

Ours is a mutual relationship. It just happened. It developed on a basis of mutual trust and respect. ●