

Investing in Israel

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AS A MESSIANIC JEWISH BELIEVER, I am grateful to evangelical Christians for being Israel's best friend. Evangelical Christians have done much to support the modern State of Israel and have been responsible for helping tens of thousands of Jews return to their homeland.

Having said that, I want to address how Christians who love Israel and Jews determine where to invest their money.

Although I am appreciative of the millions of dollars donated each year, I am grieved that much of the money goes to organizations that directly oppose Jewish evangelism. In fact, some of the funds are given to anti-missionary groups that resist the gospel and persecute Messianic Jewish believers.

Let me give you one example. Rabbi Yechiel Z. Eckstein, founder of the prominent organization International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, raised more than \$50 million last year from a database of 400,000 evangelicals to help needy Jews in Russia and Israel.

Much of the money donated is a result of infomercials that air on Christian TV and feature music by well-known Messianic artists. The programs give the impression that Eckstein is a Messianic Jewish believer. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The following quotes were taken from his book What Christians Should Know About Jews and Judaism:

"The notion that Jews are damned without Christ and that only through him and Christianity can they find fulfillment is utterly rejected."

"A Jew who accepts Jesus as Lord or Messiah effectively ceases to be a Jew. ... He is like a defector who walked out on his God and his family."

"From a Jewish point of view, Messianic Jews are a front for evangelical Christians who try to wean Jews away from their ancestral faith by lulling them into believing that they can accept Jesus as Lord and still remain Jewish."

As you can see, the rabbi is clearly opposed to Jews' hearing the gospel, yet well-meaning Christians continue to send millions of dollars to his organization.

In light of his stated opposition to Jewish evangelism and Messianic Judaism, should we expect that even a small portion of the millions of dollars he receives is used to help Messianic Jews living in Russia get back to Israel or to help needy Messianic Jews in Israel with food or clothing?

When Christians donate money to help Jews immigrate to Israel, they often give to an organization called The Jewish Agency. But contrary to what most people think, the agency is not part of the Israeli government. It is a private organization.

Because many Orthodox Jewish leaders are anti-Messianic, a percentage of their budgets go to combat the spread of the gospel in Israel. Christian Zionists need to be cautious of this problem and give to ministries that do not withhold the truth from Jews. There are excellent Christian organizations

that help Israel, but they do so in the name of Jesus.

When the apostle Paul raised money for Jerusalem while on his missionary journeys, he always did it for Jewish believers in Yeshua (see Acts 24:17; Rom. 15:26-27; 1 Cor. 16:1-3).

The next time you donate money to a Jewish organization or ministry, please ask yourself the following questions and let your responses be the criteria for confirming which group you should give to:

1. Is the organization committed to reaching Jewish people with the gospel, or is it opposed to evangelism?
2. Will your giving directly benefit your Messianic brothers and sisters in Israel?
3. Are you donating to organizations that support the cause of Christ?

By all means, please continue giving to Israel but do so wisely. Make it a priority to support Messianic Jews in Israel and Jewish organizations that promote the gospel.

Jonathan Bernis, a Jewish believer in Yeshua (Jesus), is founder of Hear O Israel Ministries, an organization doing extensive outreach and humanitarian aid around the world. He is also executive director of Phoenix-based Jewish Voice Ministries International. He founded two Messianic congregations and served them as a senior Messianic rabbi for 11 years. To read past columns in Charisma by Jonathan Bernis, log on at