

Mike Evans Sues Jentezen Franklin Over Holocaust Survivor Funds

Update: This story has been updated to feature a response from Free Chapel.

Mike Evans, founder of Friends of Zion in Jerusalem, has filed a lawsuit against Pastor Jentezen Franklin and Free Chapel Worship Center, a multisite megachurch based in Gainesville, Georgia. Evans says Franklin and Free Chapel have withheld more than \$3.3 million in money raised to support charitable projects for Holocaust survivors; a spokesperson for Free Chapel categorically denied these claims in a statement to *Charisma News*. Franklin and Evans both serve as faith advisers to President Donald Trump.

According to copies of the lawsuit published by the *Washington Post*, Mike Evans and Churches United with Israel Inc. filed the lawsuit through the U.S. District Court for the northern district of Georgia, Gainesville division, against Jentezen Franklin and Free Chapel Worship Center. The lawsuit accuses Franklin and Free Chapel of civil conspiracy, breach of contract, violation of Georgia law, misappropriation of name and likeness, unjust enrichment, constructive trust/accounting, negligent misrepresentation and two counts of fraud.

The lawsuit says that on Dec. 13, 2017, Franklin and Free Chapel agreed to collaborate with Churches United to raise funds for charitable projects in Israel, including construction of a community center for Holocaust survivors and a Holocaust survivors' food kitchen (and corresponding meals program). The lawsuit alleges that Franklin proposed to Evans that he would "solicit donations for the projects and promised

that 100% of the funds [he] collected would be remitted to Churches United.” In exchange, Evans said he would, among other things, “introduce Franklin to dignitaries and persons of influence in Israel and vouch for Franklin’s credibility and integrity” and “provide Franklin with contact information for donors who contribute to Churches United.”

Over \$4.5 million was raised for these projects as of Aug. 26, 2019. However, Evans says Franklin and Free Chapel have only delivered \$1.2 million of the money to Churches United. Churches United reportedly submitted a letter to Free Chapel in May to demand the remaining \$3.3 million. The lawsuit claims Free Chapel and Franklin “rejected Churches United’s attempts to informally resolve the disputes between the parties,” prompting the lawsuit.

The suit alleges that Evans “has and will suffer substantial loss, which is unascertainable at this time, and future economic loss which presently is incalculable” and demands a jury trial, injunctive relief and a temporary restraining order against Franklin. An attorney for Evans did not respond to attempts to reach out for further statement.

Tracy Page, a spokesperson for Free Chapel, told *Charisma News* in a statement that Evans’ charges were false.

“We do not customarily comment on litigation, but these accusations are so absurdly false that they demand a response,” Page said. “We categorically deny them and we will defend our hard earned reputation to the fullest extent of the law. As we do so, our ministry will continue to provide support to those in need around the world, including holocaust survivors, through our faithful donors. Free Chapel is a longstanding member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and for nearly thirty years it has received an annual independent, clean audit from an outside firm.”

In a Twitter thread posted Friday afternoon, reporter Michelle

Boorstein reported that “a letter from Franklin’s attorneys to Evans’ attorneys says there was no contract between the men, and Franklin had only offered to give a ‘gift’ –less his own ‘costs and expenses’ for doing the fundraising.” {eoa}