A Temple for All the Nations: Jewish-Christian Cooperation for the Construction of the Third Temple

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Of all the diverse activities in the sphere of contemporary Jewish–Christian relations, the ties that have developed between Jewish and Protestant fundamentalist groups for the achievement of a common objective—the reestablishment of the Holy Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem—are undoubtedly unique. This essay is devoted to an analysis of these ties.

The Temple Mount, where both the First and Second Holy Temples once stood, is Judaism’s holiest site, whereas Muslims revere it as the location of Muhammed’s ascent to heaven and regard it as the third holiest site of Islam, superseded only by Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia. The Temple Mount’s sanctity has turned it into a focal point of the Israeli–Arab conflict. After the Israeli army captured it during the Six-Day War of June 1967, a status quo was established according to which day-to-day control of the Temple Mount compound was formally assigned to the Supreme Muslim Council (known as the Waqf), with Israeli authorities controlling the Western Wall plaza located directly underneath the Mount.¹ In addition, the Chief Rabbinate ruled that Jews were not allowed to enter the Temple Mount compound, as the site of the Holy Temple was out of bounds to anyone in a state of ritual impurity.²

Nevertheless, several individuals and groups challenged the status quo, in both the legal and religious areas. Among the most prominent of those opposed to the status quo agreement was Shlomo Goren, later to become the Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Israel, who at the time of the Six-Day War was serving as chief rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces. Goren, relying in part on his own measurements of the Temple Mount (which, he claimed, allowed him to determine more precisely which parts of the site were sanctified), demanded that Jews be permitted to pray in certain other sections of the compound.³ Citing security concerns, this demand was refused by the police. At the end of the 1960s a group known as the Temple Mount Faithful (Neemanéi har habayit) began its persistent efforts to enable Jews to pray on the Mount, and to this day holds a public demonstration every few months before its gates.
In addition to the overt public struggle for Jewish prayer on the Mount, a few clandestine plans were laid to destroy the mosques that were located there. In April 1984, a group that came to be known as the “Jewish underground” was apprehended. Comprising several leading members of the religious-nationalist Gush Emunim movement, this group carried out a number of terrorist actions that resulted in injuries and deaths among Palestinians. However, their most ambitious scheme was to blow up the mosques in order to pave the way for the establishment of the Third Temple. Later that same year, another clandestine group that became known as the “Lifta underground” (after the name of the abandoned Arab village on the outskirts of Jerusalem in which they lived) was apprehended. Members of this group were formerly secular Jews who had adopted a religious way of life that was strongly influenced by militant kabbalistic traditions; their plan, too, was to blow up the Temple Mount mosques.4

Ironically, the only person who actually caused any damage on the Mount was a Christian tourist, Michael Dennis Rohan, who, in August 1969, attempted to set fire to the al-Aqsa Mosque and succeeded in causing some damage to the mosque’s furnishings, including an ancient wooden minbar (preacher’s pulpit). Rohan was influenced by millenarian ideas that posited the necessity of restoring the Temple as part of a divine scenario for the Christian “End Times” that would lead to the second coming of Christ. This dramatic act on the part of a young man who was later declared to be deranged was one of the most extreme consequences of the importance assigned to the Temple Mount by some fundamentalist Protestants.

**Historical Background of Protestant Fundamentalism**

The interest that fundamentalist Protestants exhibit in Jews and in the concept of the return to Zion, as well as their support of modern-day Zionism, is deeply rooted in Christian millenarian beliefs regarding the second coming of Christ and the establishment of a thousand-year kingdom of God on earth. Belief in the second coming was characteristic of early Christianity, though it was abandoned in the 4th and 5th centuries when Christianity became the dominant faith in the territories of the Roman empire. The revival of Christian millenarianism came in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. Additional waves of messianism emerged in England during the revolutionary period in the mid-17th century and again in 19th-century Britain and elsewhere in Europe. During the latter wave, there were those who called for the return of the Jews to their ancestral homeland. Among them was Wilhelm Hechler, a German clergyman who developed friendly relations with Theodor Herzl and helped him both to contact leading Christian individuals and to mobilize German support for Zionist aspirations.5 In addition to their pro-Zionist activity, such people were often active in missionary efforts among the Jews.

From the mid-19th century, messianic concepts began to penetrate Protestant denominations in the United States; by the end of the century, millenarianism had taken root among the more fundamentalist groupings of American Protestantism. For fundamentalist Christians, messianic beliefs lent an element of urgency to their call for a return to religiosity, spiritual rebirth, and acceptance of Jesus as a personal savior. The American fundamentalist movement became the largest and dominant
Two eschatological schools of thought in Protestantism influenced fundamentalist Christian thinking. The first, less widespread today, is the “historical school” that predominated in the 19th century, which maintains that End Times events have already begun and that it is possible to identify certain occurrences and developments fitting in with biblical prophecies that relate to the millennium. The other school of thought, known as dispensationalism, maintains that events connected with the End Times have not yet begun. Beginning in the late 19th century, the dispensationalist school became more dominant among fundamentalists.

The central concept of dispensationalism is that the second coming of Christ will take place in two stages. In the first, Jesus will reappear in heaven but will not descend to earth. In heaven, he will meet the true believers—those who were “born again” by adopting Christ as their personal savior. In an act known as “the rapture,” these believers will be miraculously drawn up to Jesus from the earth, while true believers who died prior to the appearance of the Messiah will be resurrected from the dead, also to be joined with Jesus. All of this is slated to happen in the near future, although no one knows exactly when.

The true believers will remain with Jesus for seven years (or three-and-a-half years, according to another interpretation), during which period the earth will undergo “the great tribulation.” This will be manifested in natural disasters such as earthquakes, widespread floods, volcanic outbursts, hunger, and plagues, and also in wars, uprisings, revolutions, and a reign of terror in many parts of the globe. For the Jews this will be “a time of trouble for Jacob” (Jer. 30:7). Despite their return to their homeland, prior to or during this period, they will be considered “lacking in faith” because they will not have accepted Christ as their Messiah. Therefore, their state will not be the hoped for kingdom of God, only a stage in the developments that will precede the coming of the Messiah. During the period of “the great tribulation” there will arise a Jewish ruler—the Antichrist—who will pass himself off as the true Messiah and be accepted by the Jews as their redeemer. Taking over the rebuilt Temple, the Antichrist will institute a reign of terror. Jews who accept the kingdom of Christ during this period will be persecuted by the followers of the false messiah, and some of them will even be killed. There will be a series of attempted invasions of the Holy Land from all corners of the world, and about two-thirds of the resettled Jewish people will be destroyed. The period of the great tribulation will end with the return of Christ to earth, together with his true believers, to establish his kingdom. He will defeat the Antichrist, establish a regime of justice throughout the world, and make Jerusalem his capital.

With the start of the thousand-year kingdom of God on earth, the surviving Jews will accept Jesus as their Messiah. Humankind will still be divided into nations, each with its own territory, and the Jews will live in their ancestral homeland, whose borders will be those of the historic kingdom of David. Their status will stem from being the chosen people, and they will assist Jesus in ruling the world. The thousand-year messianic regime will be an intermediary period leading to a utopian era, a period in which humankind will learn to know the Lord and to serve him faithfully. As the intermediary period draws to an end, Satan will launch his final revolt and be everlastingly defeated. The earth will undergo cosmological, geological, and climatic
changes; among other things, its physical area will be expanded. God the Father will join his son Jesus in ruling the earth, the day of the Last Judgment will be acted out, sin and death will be overcome, and the world will finally be at peace—“the wolf shall dwell with the lamb” (Isa. 11:6).3

From the outset, followers of dispensationalism naturally exhibited much interest in the fate of the Jews and their possible return to the Holy Land. To be sure, their attitude toward the Jews was (and remains) ambivalent. On the one hand, they consider them to be the Lord’s chosen people, the nation that will once again play a leading role in the kingdom of God that will be established in the messianic period. This concept differs from the traditional Christian approach that considers Christianity to be the successor of Judaism. On the other hand, the dispensationalist cast of mind vis-à-vis the Jews is not always characterized by love and trust. Some fundamentalist authors claim that God continues to be angry at the Jews because they did not accept Jesus Christ as their savior, an act that would have brought about an earlier establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

By the 1970s and 1980s, fundamentalist Christianity was on the rise in the United States. The Six-Day War of 1967, resulting in the Israeli conquest of Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights, was the catalyst that transformed many American fundamentalists into avid supporters of Israel, since the war’s outcome was interpreted as a tangible omen of the End Times. Active involvement took the form of political lobbying of the U.S. administration on behalf of Israel, alongside philanthropic efforts within Israel. In addition, since Israel had captured the Temple Mount, some fundamentalists now broached the idea of rebuilding the Temple, a topic that became an increasingly central theme in fundamentalist discourse.8 For example, Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth*, published only three years after the war (which eventually had sales of approximately 30 million copies), places Israel at the focus of the cosmic drama that will include the rebuilding of the Temple and the rise of the Antichrist as events leading up to the End Times.9

One of the most prominent Christian supporters of efforts to reestablish the Holy Temple is Jan Willem van der Hoeven, a Dutch pastor who received theological training in England and who, since 1963, has resided in Israel. Among other ventures, he founded the International Christian Embassy, a nongovernmental organization whose efforts are directed at enhancing the image of Israel among evangelical Christians throughout the world.10 In 1997, van der Hoeven, a vociferous opponent of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and its inevitable territorial compromises, withdrew from the International Christian Embassy in order to be free to promote his political views more vigorously. The new organization he created, the International Christian Zionist Center, has active ties with the Temple Mount Faithful.11 Other Christian fundamentalists, as will be seen, have sought to collaborate with Jewish groups promoting the reestablishment of the Temple.

**Jewish Movements for the Establishment of the Temple**

In the wake of the Six-Day War, a new era began in the short history of the state of Israel. One of the indelible images of that war is a photograph of weeping paratroopers
standing at the Western Wall in the just-captured Old City of Jerusalem. That photo, along with the declaration by Col. Mordechai (Motta) Gur that “the Temple Mount is in our hands,” became two of the most outstanding symbols of the war.

As noted, not all Israelis agreed with the compromise status quo for the Temple Mount. About two years after the war, Gershon Salomon founded the Temple Mount Faithful group, which called for an end to Muslim control of the Mount and its transformation into the focal point of Israeli sovereignty. The movement’s supporters came from the ranks of the Greater Land of Israel Movement (Hatenu’ah lema’an erez yisrael hashelemah), a broad-based movement founded in the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day War, which over the years became mainly (though not exclusively) religious and right-wing in orientation.

In the four decades of its existence, the Temple Mount Faithful has concentrated on public protest demonstrations held at the foot of the Temple Mount at regular intervals during the year, generally in conjunction with Jewish religious holidays and fast days. The demonstrations take the form of a convoy of pilgrims and usually include ritual elements connected with the Temple Mount, as described in the ancient Jewish sources. During Sukkot, for example, the procession route passes through the Siloam tunnel (which in ancient times provided water to Jerusalem from the Gihon spring), so as to symbolically recreate the water libation ceremony that was performed in the Temple during this festival; on Shavuot, the Temple Mount Faithful bring the first sheaves of harvested wheat. The group also conducts demonstrations on modern Israeli holidays and on days of commemoration—for instance, on Memorial Day (commemorating all of Israel’s wars) and Jerusalem Day (which more specifically commemorates the reunification of Jerusalem).

All of these demonstrations take place at the Mughrabi gate (located near the Western Wall plaza), since Israeli authorities prevent the demonstrators from entering the compound. Members of the Temple Mount Faithful invariably demand that central state institutions such as the Knesset and the Supreme Court be moved to the compound and that military ceremonies regularly held in the Western Wall plaza be conducted on the Mount itself. As we shall later discuss, Temple Mount Faithful activities are publicized on an English-language website that is directed, in the main, to a Christian fundamentalist audience.

Over the years, the Temple Mount Faithful has lost some of its influence as many of its religious members have joined more narrowly based groups that emphasize the practical or spiritual (as opposed to political) aspects of reestablishing the Temple. One of these groups is the Temple Institute (Makhon hamikdash), founded in 1984 by Rabbi Yisrael Ariel and located in the Jewish quarter of the Old City. The institute’s main objective is to enhance knowledge of the history and practices of the Temple. It operates a museum, a publishing house, yeshivot, and a workshop that reconstructs utensils used in the Temple; develops curricula for state religious schools; presents folkloristic recreations of ceremonies that were conducted in the Second Temple; and sponsors an annual colloquium on religious issues relating to the Temple. Thousands of pupils from state religious schools visit the Institute each year, along with dozens of groups of soldiers and thousands of evangelical Christian tourists. In 1999, journalist Gershom Gorenberg was informed that this last group accounted for 60 percent of the Institute’s income from tickets and the sale of products in its store.
A second group, the Movement for the Establishment of the Temple (Hetenu’ah lekhinun hamikdash) focuses on bringing Jews to the Temple Mount for purposes of prayer. This group, founded in 1987 by about 20 people who had left the Temple Mount Faithful, is headed by Yosef Elboim, a member of the Belz hasidic group, and, like the Temple Institute, appeals to a religiously observant population. Some of its members are also identified with the extremist nationalist Kach movement founded by Meir Kahane (outlawed in 1994, following the massacre in Hebron that was instigated by one of its members, Baruch Goldstein). For Elboim, a haredi Jew whose life is devoted to the practice of religious ritual, establishment of the Third Temple is a religious issue par excellence. Contrary to Gershon Salomon, he believes that the demand for Jewish control of the Temple Mount is first and foremost a religious imperative—“And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them” (Exod. 25:8)—that does not necessarily bear a nationalist Zionist stamp.

In view of Salomon’s recurrent failure to receive permission from the authorities for public prayer on the Mount, the Movement for the Establishment of the Temple adopted a different tactic, avoiding publicity and receiving clearance from the police before organizing small groups of worshippers. In their view, “conquest” of the Temple Mount was contingent on a constant presence there, even if this presence consisted of relatively few individuals. Visits were conducted every Tuesday and Saturday until the Mount was closed to Jews after the outbreak of the second (“al-Aqsa”) intifada in September 2000, and were renewed when it was opened once again to Jews in November 2003. The movement’s leadership deliberated about joining forces with Christians in their efforts, with the exchange of opinions on the matter being conducted in the pages of Yibaneh hamikdash, the movement’s newsletter. While not all were of one mind on this issue, the group’s attitude underwent change over time, as will be seen, and this enabled the establishment of cooperative ties with evangelical Protestants.

Fundamentalist Jewish Theological Justifications for Jewish-Christian Collaboration

Jewish temple activists were at first unable to fathom Christian interest in their cause. This was especially true of those who came from an Orthodox or haredi background, who found it difficult to find a common language with their fundamentalist Christian supporters. Notwithstanding, some of them began to consider theological arguments that might justify their forging ties with non-Jews.

In March 1990, for instance, Yisrael Schneider, a Bratslav hasid, published an article in Yibaneh hamikdash in which he justified accepting help from Christians by drawing on a talmudic tale involving an encounter between R. Shimon bar Yohai and a demon. After first attacking those haredi yeshivot that did nothing to further the establishment of the Temple, Schneider recounted the talmudic story: R. Shimon bar Yohai once journeyed to Rome to request that the edicts forcing apostasy upon the Jews be rescinded. Upon reaching the gates of the city, he was met by the devil Ben Tamalion, whereupon he wept bitterly: why a devil, since even Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah, had encountered three angels when she fled her mistress?
Schneider’s explanation was that the times had changed: God Himself had regularly appeared to Abraham in the course of the latter’s offering up of sacrifices, and because of this, even his wife’s maidservant merited being visited by angels. However, by the time of Shimon bar Yohai, matters had taken a turn for the worse—the Temple had been destroyed, the revolt mounted by Bar Kokhba had failed, and the parokhet (the curtain of the Holy Ark in the Temple) was in Roman hands. Under such conditions, angels no longer appeared to men; assistance could be offered only by demons. As Schneider put it:

And in our days, if only we could be privileged to have angels from Heaven build the Temple for us, but realistically—we can only hope for the help of devils. More simply put: if we cannot expect help from the yeshivot, who knows—perhaps our succor will come from the Gentiles? It is Jewish destiny that all the God-fearing do nothing and wait for the Temple to be revealed from Heaven, [and] only Christian fundamentalist sects believe that it is the Jews who must build the Third Temple. May the miracle come from anywhere.17

An even more innovative argument came from Yitzhak Hayutman, who, like Schneider, was an active member of the Movement for the Establishment of the Temple. Born in Haifa, Hayutman had become religiously observant while he was a university student in California during the height of the “flower children” movement of the late 1960s. In the late 1980s, he founded the Hayut Foundation for Renewing the Zionist Vision, whose basic objective was the establishment of a “universal temple” on the Temple Mount. This temple would be, in effect, a virtual museum in which visitors would be able to “reconstruct” the act of Creation by means of advanced technologies. It would also feature sacrifices, though not of live animals. Rather, visitors would symbolically “offer up” their negative traits and go through a process of self-correction while participating in the mystic experience of being partner to the Creation. Such a temple, wrote Hayutman, was meant for everyone—religious and secular Jews, and also Gentiles.18 Indeed, nonreligious Jews and Gentiles were in particular need of such a temple:

If we look at this from a sociological and religious standpoint, it would seem that the Jewish people have become accustomed to living without a temple, especially with regard to the religious experience sensed by the individual. … In contrast, those Gentiles who have begun seeking a close relationship with Israel [and who] are not obligated to observe the 613 commandments—and, truth be told, also those myriads of Jews who do not observe the commandments—both these groups may gain an understanding that … participation in the holy ritual is the way to draw near to God.19

Hayutman pointed to fundamentalist Christians as the possible target audience for this project since they were a powerful body with tens of millions of believers. If people belonging to various nations appeared before international forums and demanded the reestablishment of the Temple in Jerusalem and the right to pray in it, he argued, this would undermine the claim that such efforts were being sought by Jewish zealots desiring to provoke the Muslim world.20

Hayutman’s articles aroused lively debate within the ranks of the Movement for the Establishment of the Temple. His specific ideas regarding the “universal temple” were ultimately rejected.21 However, his call for cooperation with fundamentalist
Christians was received more positively. Among those who wrote in favor of Hayutman’s proposal was Elitzur Segal, one of the founders of the Jewish temple movement. In the mid-1990s, Segal (in the wake of another activist, Chaim Richman) developed close ties with a group known as B’nei Noah, or the children of Noah.

B’nei Noah, which currently numbers approximately 30,000 members, was initiated in the 1970s by two Protestant evangelical pastors, Vendyl Jones of Texas and J. David Davis of Tennessee. In contrast to Christians who believe that after the period of the great tribulation they will be saved and thus remain untouched by the cataclysm, the Noahides, as they are often known, believe that they must perform specific acts in order to survive the apocalyptic inferno. Their central concept is based on fulfillment of the seven commandments of the Children of Noah as elaborated in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 56a), which comprise prohibitions on idolatry, murder, theft, sexual immorality, blasphemy, and tearing a limb from a living animal, alongside the directive to establish and maintain just courts of law.

B’nei Noah’s roots go back to ideas expounded by a 19th-century Italian rabbi, Elijah Benamozegh (1822–1900), who later became the mentor of a French Christian theologian named Aimé Pallière. The latter expressed interest in converting to Judaism, but Benamozegh dissuaded him, believing that Pallière’s more important mission was to disseminate his teachings regarding the Noahide laws. Pallière thus engaged in a lengthy career as a spiritual guide for both Christians and Jews, and was also responsible for the posthumous publication of Benamozegh’s book, *Israël et humanité* (1914). Years later, his writings were rediscovered by Jones and Davis and were used as the basis of the new Noahide movement.

In his teachings, Benamozegh pointed to the affinity between the nations of the world as manifested in the similarity of many of their core beliefs. At the same time, there was an essential dissimilarity between Israel and the other nations. Israel, termed by Benamozegh “the firstborn,” was “charged with teaching and administering the true religion of mankind.” Moreover, according to Benamozegh, the Hebrew Bible bears two messages. The first is directed at the Jews, who are obligated to fulfill all 613 commandments of the Torah and to maintain their national distinctiveness. The second, which is aimed at the rest of mankind, obligates them to observe a very limited number of commandments—the Noahide laws. Because these commandments were universally obligatory, they were given to the children of Israel generations before the revelation at Mt. Sinai.

The current B’nei Noah movement began in 1973–1974, when David Davis began to delve into the issue of the historical Jesus. This quest brought him to the Second Temple period and to the Mishnah. As he read the Mishnah, he realized that he needed to know more about Judaism; the more he studied, the more he (and later, a larger group of B’nei Noah) drifted from Christianity. At a certain point, their lack of knowledge, coupled with their feelings of isolation within the fundamentalist Christian community in which most of them lived, caused the Noahides to look for guidance and support among members of the Orthodox Jewish community.

Around the time of its first international conference, which convened in April 1990, B’nei Noah contacted the Chabad/Lubavitch movement—whose leader, R. Menahem Mendel Schneersohn, had long encouraged his disciples to spread the Noahide laws among the Gentiles—to ask for aid and instruction. Chabad declined...
to send formal representatives to the conference. However, when the incumbent Sephardic chief rabbi, Mordechai Eliahu, was contacted sometime thereafter, he endorsed the movement’s initiative. Subsequently, close relations developed between B’nei Noah and Rabbi Chaim Richman of the Temple Institute, to the extent that the B’nei Noah newsletter features a regular column about issues concerning the Temple, while a number of B’nei Noah leaders serve as the Institute’s official representatives in contacts with non-Jewish organizations. The Temple Institute, for its part, disseminates information about B’nei Noah to groups of Christians visiting its premises in the Old City of Jerusalem. In addition, Richman delivers regular lectures to B’nei Noah on the principles of Judaism, and the Institute assisted in drawing up the program for B’nei Noah’s second international conference, held in 1992.

On January 9, 2006, B’nei Noah inaugurated a “high council” whose mandate included establishing contacts between B’nei Noah groups and certain groups among Orthodox Jewry. At this session, which I attended as an observer, the council was made subject to the authority and guidance of “the reestablished Sanhedrin,” a body comprising a group of mostly extreme right-wing Israeli rabbis and individuals active in movements for the reestablishment of the Temple. Representatives of B’nei Noah, foremost among them Vendyl Jones, were also formally charged with disseminating the message with regard to this new Jewish-Christian alliance.

Although the modern B’nei Noah movement was brought into existence by two individuals who, at the time, were Protestant evangelical ministers, its theology has evolved considerably since the 1970s, in large part as a consequence of the group’s interactions with Jewish fundamentalists, notably Richman and Elitzur Segal. In 1995, Segal published an article in Yibaneh hamikdash that both elaborated and transformed the Noahide philosophy, with specific reference to the Temple. According to Isaiah’s vision of the End of Days, the Temple would become a place of prayer for all peoples, who would be instructed there in God’s ways (Isa. 2:2–3; 56:3–7; 66:18–23). Segal maintained that, with the establishment of the state of Israel, the groundwork had been laid for achieving Jewish hegemony over the nations. To this purpose, the ancient Noahide covenant had to be renewed. This covenant—which God had actually made with Adam, several generations prior to Noah—had been forgotten, but it had been renewed after the Flood, transmitted first to the children of Noah, then to Abraham, and so on down the line until the time of the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. From that point onwards, the children of Israel were obligated by all the laws of the Torah, whereas those of other nations had a more limited obligation to observe the Noahide commandments. In the time of the First and Second Temples, sacrifices were brought both by Jews and by non-Jews who observed the Noahide commandments. This interrelationship between Jews and non-Jews, Segal claimed, was reflected in the fact that the Sanhedrin had seventy members—corresponding to the seventy nations of the ancient world—as well as in the bringing of seventy sacrifices during the holiday of Sukkot.

Segal went on to argue against the traditional view that Judaism does not seek proselytes. In fact, he claimed, it was permissible to renew efforts to disseminate the Abrahamic faith among the nations. The practice of placing obstacles in the path of those who wish to join the ranks of Judaism, he explained, was the outcome of constraints arising from Jewish existence in the diaspora: Judaism could not behave as a
missionary faith for fear that this would increase tension between the Jews and Christians and Muslims. However, the true essence of Judaism is to attract all individuals to its faith. Hence, Segal’s call for the establishment of an “Abrahamic commonwealth” of nations that would accept Judaism in its “light” form—that is, a form suitable for Gentiles—with Israel standing at its center, just as Great Britain stands at the heart of the British commonwealth.30

_Tikun 'olam_ or repairing the world, he continued, is to be achieved by means of the Temple. Reestablishment of the Temple will mark the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy, which foresaw the nations of the world proclaiming: “Let us go up to the mount of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may instruct us in His ways and that we may walk in His paths. . . . Thus He will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the many peoples” (Isa. 2:3–4).31 Jerusalem will become the capital of the world and all nations will come there to learn and to be judged. Noahides, each of whom will have the status of _ger toshav_, or resident non-Jew,32 will worship the Lord in the Temple through the mediation of the people of Israel, using the lingua franca of the Abrahamic commonwealth—Hebrew.33

What Segal essentially did was to take the vision of Elijah Benamozegh and transform it into a platform for the creation of Jewish hegemony centered on the Temple in Jerusalem. Benamozegh, who expounded his views before Zionism was a mass political movement, did not foresee a sovereign Jewish state or seek to convey a nationalist messianic message. Rather, his central concept was one of universalism, that of a world in which Jews interact with other nations and serve as a sort of moral compass for them. Segal recast this vision, replacing interreligious harmony with a far more particularistic scheme that emphasized Jewish superiority vis-à-vis the Gentiles. In this fashion, the “partnership” with B’nei Noah (which, as noted, was carried out mainly by Richman and others at the Temple Institute) was theologically justified, as the Jews were clearly understood to be the leaders and B’nei Noah the followers.

**Searching for the Red Heifer**

One of the more esoteric activities undertaken by the Temple Institute is the continuing search for a halakhically valid red heifer (_parah adumah_) whose ashes can be used in purification ceremonies. As has been noted, the site of the Holy Temple is considered out of bounds to those in a state of ritual impurity. Jewish law distinguishes between several levels of impurity, the most severe being that caused by contact with (or proximity to) a human corpse. In general, individuals today are considered to have the status of “corpse-defiled,” and this status can be changed only by a ceremony utilizing red heifer ashes. Yet the conditions set down in the Bible (and later elaborated in the Mishnah) make it almost impossible to find a pure red heifer. It must be three years old and completely red—even two hairs of another color disqualify it. Its horns and nose, too, must be red; it must have no blemish and never have been yoked. According to rabbinic tradition, only nine red heifers were ever sacrificed and burnt, the first being prepared by Moses. Maimonides writes that the tenth will be sacrificed by the Messiah.34
To date, all efforts to locate a valid red heifer have failed.\(^{35}\) In August 1996, a red heifer was born on a dairy farm in Kfar Hasidim, not far from Haifa. The owner, Shemarya Shor, called in the regional rabbi for a consultation, and he in turn invited Yisrael Ariel, president of the Temple Institute, to come and see it. Three leading figures from Temple Mount movements joined him: Gershon Salomon of the Temple Mount Faithful, Yosef Elboim of the Movement for the Establishment of the Temple, and Yehuda Etzion, who had led the “Jewish underground.” Other rabbinical authorities soon followed, and the heifer, named Melody, became a local and even international celebrity. Among those who wrote about her were a number of Christian fundamentalist pastors. How great was the general disappointment about a year later, when a few white hairs appeared in Melody’s tail and dashed the hopes of her becoming a halakhically valid parah adumah.\(^{36}\)

In April 2002, the Temple Institute announced that, about a month earlier, another red heifer had been born in Israel. The announcement, prominently featured in the Institute’s website, provided no details about the birth but was accompanied by a photo of the cow with Richman and Menahem Makover, the Institute’s director, standing next to it. In November of that year, an announcement on the website reported that this cow, too, had been disqualified.\(^{37}\) I have been unable to verify any of the details, as the Institute has been very discreet about facts that might reveal where this cow had been born.

A few years prior to these episodes, a Pentecostal clergyman named Clyde Lott contacted Chaim Richman of the Temple Institute to offer his assistance in the search. Lott, who had years of experience raising cattle, came to Jerusalem for the first time in 1990. Later, together with Richman and Ariel, he scouted places in Israel that would be suitable for raising a herd of red cattle that, it was hoped, would produce at least one valid red heifer. In 1994, he invited Richman to come to Mississippi to examine a number of red heifers that might meet all the halakhic requirements. It was estimated that the cost of bringing cattle over to Israel was about $2,000 per head. To finance the project, a non-profit company, Canaan Land Restoration of Israel, Inc., was established and a fundraising campaign, aimed at Christian fundamentalists, was launched throughout the United States.\(^{38}\)

The project was never realized. In 1998, Richman and his Christian partners came to a parting of the ways, ostensibly because of economic difficulties. It was rumored, however, that the breakup was actually due to apprehension on the part of the Temple Institute that its Christian partners intended to engage in proselytizing among Jews in Israel.\(^{39}\) This rumor was confirmed in an informal conversation I conducted with a leading Temple Mount activist who had been involved in the negotiations, who told me that the venture was called off after his colleagues viewed a video tape featuring Lott and another clergyman discussing their intention to engage in missionary activity as part of their preparations for the End Times.

Common Enemies, Different Visions

In October 2001, during the holiday of Sukkot, the Temple Mount Faithful held one of its demonstrations at the Mughrabi gate. One of those in attendance was Jan
Willem van der Hoeven, who declared that he and his followers loved the Jewish nation, and Gershon Salomon in particular. He asked rhetorically: Did God bring the remnants of the Jewish people from Auschwitz only for the sake of praying at this “Wailing Wall,” or did He bring them to the Temple Mount? Van der Hoeven declared that he was ashamed of those rabbis who did not instruct their faithful to build the Temple, and he offered a blessing (“in the name of the Lord”) to Salomon, with the hope that all other rabbis in Israel would follow in his path.40

The Temple Mount Faithful, the most veteran of the Jewish temple activist groups, has had ties with fundamentalist Christian groups since the early 1990s. Stanley Goldfoot, a South African-born journalist, was the initial intermediary between Salomon and a number of evangelical American Protestants.41 In the course of time, these connections led to a shift in ideological rhetoric. Whereas the Temple Mount Faithful’s message was once directly primarily at right-wing Israeli Jews who wanted to see the Temple Mount transformed into the epicenter of Israeli Zionist nationalism, it now places far greater emphasis on the reestablishment of the actual Temple, which will eventually serve as a site of prayer for all nations. This, at least, is the thrust of its English-only website (established in 1999, shortly before the onset of the new Christian millennium), which declares on its homepage: “Our goal is the building of the Third Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in our lifetime in accordance with the Word of G-d and all the Hebrew prophets and the liberation of the Temple Mount from Arab (Islamic) occupation so that it may be consecrated to the Name of G-d.”42

Salomon’s messianic ideas, based on Jewish biblical prophecies, are described in detail on the website and in Temple Mount Faithful publications. He foresees dramatic events in the near future that will be harbingers of the End of Days. The process will come to an end with the final salvation of humankind and the people’s acceptance of God as king on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Before that, however, will be the war of Gog and Magog, which will pit the forces of good against absolute evil. In the cosmic drama envisioned by Salomon, the role of demon is assigned to the Palestinian national movement. As he notes in a message written in 2001 (when Yassir Arafat was still alive and serving as the head of the Palestinian Authority): “In G-d’s end-time plans there is no place for the cruel enemies of G-d. The terrorist Arafat, and his “Palestinian Authority” will not succeed with their war. We do not fear them nor their violence. The great event of the redemption of Israel cannot be stopped. Who can stop the G-d of Israel?”43 In another article, he combined a call to bring about redemption with a warning regarding those nations who are urging the state of Israel to agree to territorial concessions:

G-d has given this great vision to our generation and we cannot run away from our responsibility to Him. The redemption of the people and land of Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple in this generation will open ways for the fulfillment of this vision all over the world. However, it must first be accomplished here in Israel. According to the Word of G-d the Temple must be rebuilt on Mt. Moriah in the midst of Jerusalem. Mashiach ben David will not come to Washington D.C, not to London, Paris or Rome, not to Cairo or Damascus, but to the place which G-d chose, Jerusalem. So my call to all the nations is to stop putting pressure on Israel to sign anti-godly so-called “peace” agreements which give the land, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount to the most cruel enemies of the G-d
and people of Israel. Do not join the enemies who want to destroy Israel. When you join with the enemies of Israel to destroy her you bring yourselves under the judgment of G-d which He promised to execute on the enemies of Israel.\textsuperscript{44}

Similar rhetoric regularly appears in material put out by Christian fundamentalist groups such as the International Christian Embassy and the International Christian Zionist Center.\textsuperscript{45} Like Salomon, they regard present-day Jerusalem as a holy city whose sanctity is not yet fully manifested: it is still subject to internal Israeli politics, which are hardly messianic, and it still contains a sizeable Muslim presence. Although these negative elements are due to disappear at the End of Days, the present state of affairs calls for positive action. Thus there is room for “Christian Zionists” to join in the efforts to bring about the messianic future. When the Messiah comes, Jerusalem will become the capital of the world, and all those who fought on his side during the battle of Gog and Magog will be worthy of heaven. The Temple Mount, according to both Jewish and Christian fundamentalists, plays a central role in the messianic future. Both groups are also in agreement that, so long as the Temple Mount is under Muslim control, final redemption is impossible. It naturally follows that all peace negotiations between Israel and the Arabs (the Palestinians, in particular—but not exclusively) are an obstacle to redemption. In the eyes of its Christian supporters, the Temple Mount Faithful (regarded by most Israelis as a marginal movement) symbolizes the true spirit of Zionism.

The inherent paradox of Jewish-Christian fundamentalist cooperation is that, while each group may be seeking the same short-term goal, the desired end is vastly different. Both groups envision a messianic future in which the kingdom of God is established for all time. But in the Christian version, Jesus occupies center-stage and Jews who do not acknowledge his kingship are destroyed. In the Jewish version, Jesus is, of course, entirely absent.

The question, then, is where this relationship is headed. Outward cooperation between Jewish and Christian groups masks a basic lack of respect that each side feels for the other. At times this basic distrust comes to the surface, as was the case in the abrogated cooperative venture between the Temple Institute and the Canaan Land Restoration company. Another instance involves Mel Gibson’s film of 2004, \textit{The Passion of the Christ}, which was vociferously attacked by Jewish groups across the political spectrum, both in Israel and abroad. Moshe Feiglin, who heads the extreme right-wing faction of the Likud party, and who is also identified with Temple Mount activists, criticized both the movie and the support that it received from conservative Christian audiences.\textsuperscript{46} Jan Willem van der Hoeven sent a laudatory message to Gibson in which he expressed his hope that, in the wake of the movie, Jews would comprehend the evil they had wrought in the matter of the crucifixion; would repent; and would make the effort to rebuild the Temple.\textsuperscript{47}

It may well be that Jewish temple activists view Christian support as useful but not absolutely crucial to their cause, and are thus willing to risk foregoing their assistance in the event that a given situation is felt to be untenable. Christian supporters, for their part, are unable to conceal their hope that the Jews will in time accept Jesus as their savior. In the meantime, given that messianism is central to their beliefs, it is reasonable to assume continuing fundamentalist Christian support for Israel and the
Jewish-Christian Collaboration in Plans to Reestablish the Holy Temple

Jews, including efforts relating to the Temple Mount and the reestablishment of the Temple.

Notes

This essay was translated by Yohai Goell.


2. The Temple grounds were divided into sections of varying levels of sanctity. Some areas were limited to the priests (kohanim), and entrance to the inner sanctum, or holy of holies (kodesh hakodashim), was permitted only to the high priest, and only on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur. The prohibition with regard to ritual impurity will later be discussed at greater length.


10. The International Christian Embassy was established in 1980. Earlier that year, the Knesset had passed a law declaring Jerusalem (including East Jerusalem) to be the eternal capital of Israel. In protest, most of the countries that maintained embassies in Jerusalem transferred them to Tel Aviv. The organization operates several philanthropic projects in Israel.


12. Ibid., 174.


15. Babylonian Talmud, Me’ilah 17b.

16. The talmudic text interprets Gen. 16:7–11 (in which the term “angel of God” appears three times) as referring to three different angels; cf. Rashi’s commentary on Gen. 16:9.


20. Ibid.
21. See letters to the editor, Yibaneh hamikdash 32 (May 1990), 27–28; ibid., 35 (Aug.–Sept. 1990), 24–25; ibid., 36 (Sept.–Oct. 1990), 11–13. After the Movement for the Establishment of the Temple declined to promote his “high tech” religious project, Hayutman attempted to interest visiting Christians in the idea, without great success (interview with Hayutman, 4 Aug. 2004). Eventually the universal Temple idea was developed into a book that was geared to a “New Age” audience; see Yitzhak Hayutman and Ohad Ezrahi, Hayashan yith. adesh veheh adash yitkadesh: he’arot lemashma’at hamikdash (Jerusalem: 1997).

22. Vendyl Jones is a former pastor and an archaeologist of some fame. Indiana Jones, the hero of some of Steven Spielberg’s films, is partly based on his biography. On the growth of B’nei Noah, see Jeffrey Kaplan, Radical Religion in America: Millenarian Movements from the Far Right to the Children of Noah (Syracuse, NY: 1997), 42–47, 105–106.


25. Ibid., 44–45. Certain elements within the Chabad movement do conduct instructional campaigns among Gentiles to introduce them to the laws of the Children of Noah. To this end, they make use of pamphlets, newspaper ads, and billboards. Channel 2 of the Israeli television network reported on March 29, 2004 that such a campaign took place in Arab villages in the Galilee on the eve of Passover.

26. See, for example, the brochure published by the Temple Mount Information Center, authored by Tsvi Rogin, and titled The Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah: The Path for Gentiles to Enter into the World to Come and to Avoid the Flood of Immorality in this World (Jerusalem: 2003).

27. As reported in the Institute’s annual Mah ḥadash bemakhon hamikdash for the year 1992.

28. “The Reestablished Sanhedrin” was founded by active members of the Movement for the Establishment of the Temple, who also fill key positions within it. Yisrael Ariel, the head of the Temple Institute, also heads the “court for matters relating to the nation and the state”; Prof. Hillel Weiss, of the department of Hebrew literature in Bar-Ilan University, who has tried to unite all movements working for the reconstruction of the Temple, is its spokesman. The nasi (president) of the Sanhedrin is Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz. See its website: www.thesanhedrin.org/en/index.php/The_Re-established_Jewish_Sanhedrin (all online citations, except as indicated, were accessed on 19 July 2009).

29. This material based on my notes taken at the session conducted on 9 Jan. 2006.


31. The text follows the Jewish Publication Society’s translation.

32. This status is conferred on Gentiles who take it upon themselves to observe the seven Noahide laws and accept Jewish rule in Eretz Israel (Babylonian Talmud, ‘Avodah zarah 64b). A ger toshav is permitted to reside in the Holy Land.


34. Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot parah adumah 3:12.


36. This episode is described in Gorenberg, The End of Days, 1–29.


39. Ibid., 28.

40. This paraphrase of van der Hoeven’s comments is based on notes in Hebrew that I took at the demonstration (4 Oct. 2001).

41. Stanley Goldfoot was a particularly colorful figure. During the British Mandate period, he served as a correspondent for international English-language media while simultaneously working for the Lehi underground. Among other things, he supplied Lehi members with critical information that enabled them to assassinate U.N. mediator Count Folke Bernadotte in Jerusalem on September 17, 1948. In later years, he became active in the Temple Mount

42. See www.templemountfaithful.org.


45. See, for example, the statement by David Parsons of the International Christian Embassy: “We can take encouragement [from the fact] that the Bible promises the destiny of this long journey is not Israel’s annihilation, but rather her ultimate redemption in God” (www.icej.org/article/the_struggle_within_the_dream); Jan Willem van der Hoeven: “We live in days of almost unprecedented coming to pass of biblical prophecy. For the past five plus decades, Israel has been the focal point of prophetic fulfillment as most of the events foretold in the bulk of Scripture have been set to take place here” (www.israelmybeloved.com/channel/history_prophecy/section/prophecy_in_our_day).

46. Moshe Feiglin, “Teshukat muhamed,” Lekhathilah 131 (2004). This is a 2-page leaflet.

47. Interview of Maria Leppäkari with Jan Willem van der Hoeven, 21 April 2004. I am grateful to Dr. Leppäkari for providing me with a copy of the text.