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# Jews and Christians Bridge Gap at Recent Gathering

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Jeremy Gimpel, 26, an American born Jew and recently returned Israeli Defense soldier, believes the time is at hand to "bridge the gap between Jewish and Christian worlds."

Speaking to the newest chapter of the National American-Israel Friendship League (AIFL) at their membership drive breakfast on Sept. 15, Gimpel focused on what he considered "the greatest movement of all time"-a movement of connection and gathering, an "awakening in the Christian world."

Among the many in attendance at the Salt Lake Marriott were William Behrer, Chief Operating Officer of the National AIFL located in New York and Loraine T. Pace, president of the newly organized AIFL in Utah.

"There's so much that brings us together...[and] so little that divides us," Gimpel said, suggesting that everyone must "wake up" and "come together" with shared values, morals, ethics, and family connections.

"We're now at the base of a mighty war," he said. "It's not just the war in Israel. [It's] the very beginning of World War III.

Gimpel spoke specifically about the war not being about "boundaries and politics" but that "a holy, spiritual war" was occurring, and that now was the time to make a choice, to take a stand, because soon the "gray line" of "ambivalence" would be at an end.

Gimpel's certainty that we are fighting "a very dangerous enemy," a "force of evil" compelled many in the newly organized league to sit up and take notice.

"It's certainly not the kind of talk I expected to hear from a young orthodox Jew," said Pace, who suggested that Gimpel's "invitation for Jews and Christians to come together because of their common roots in the Bible, and the fight against terrorism was very compelling..." though not altogether what she would have liked to have heard.

"As a friendship league we support any positive alliance between America and Israel that works for our good and safety, [but] if there had been time, I would like to have heard more of his personal perceptions of the recent war as a citizen and soldier," Pace said.

Gimpel's speech continued to draw upon the lines of terrorism and the connection between countries,

suggesting to the crowd that we should not be afraid to speak up.

"It's okay to say that terrorism is wrong," Gimpel said. "It's okay to say that a mother who would strap dynamite to her baby boy's chest when he's 11-years-old, and blow himself up and kill other little children is evil. It's a tragedy."

Though Gimpel believes in the right of those living their religion as they see it, he takes issue with a religion that is "interpreted...to sanctify death. He takes issue with a hate so strong that the deaths of children would be celebrated. He has a difficult time understanding such a level of hate.

"When I think of things that I hate, what comes to mind is boiled okra," he said, referring to the meal his mother always made against his request.

"The [Arabs], they hate us so much. They don't just hate the Jewish people, they hate Christians as well. They hate us more than they love their own children. They want us all dead, but that's not the reason we should come together," Gimpel said, suggesting that fear is never a good reason to unite.

"Jews and Christians alike should come together because of their courage," he said. "There should be no separation between "he is a Jew, they are Christian." There is no longer any time for that, Gimpel said.

When Gimpel was in the army he says he received a "tremendous amount of support from the Christian world." Before that time he knew nothing of the AIFL. This support has helped him in "dedicat[ing his] life to strengthen[ing] the emotional and spiritual connections in everyone to the land of Israel."

Following his service in the army, and along with his friend, Ari Abramowitz, Gimpel co-founded ADMIL Ltd, (Admat Yisrael) whose purpose has been to "strengthen the emotional and spiritual connection of Jews and other lovers of Israel around the world to the Land of Israel" ([www.thelandofisrael.com](http://www.thelandofisrael.com)).

Gimpel and Abramowitz currently speak internationally to various groups, and in the past year have begun their own radio show, "A Light unto the Nations," where various topics, including "the universal connection" and the "beauty and depth of Israel through...personal stories" are shared. Gimpel grew up hearing stories of his homeland, stories that began with his grandfather's walk from Russia to Israel when he was only 15-years-old.

At the AIFL breakfast, he spoke of the difficulties of his grandfather sleeping on the floor and living in a tent for 6 months. He spoke of the 1948 war, "when the Jewish people defeated the entire Arab world with little bit more than paper airplanes and spit ball guns," the holocaust "where Jews [were] being systematically killed just because they were Jews" and what it was like for his grandfather in 1967 to "ascend to the temple mount and pray at the western wall for the first time" as a freed man.

"When my grandfather first came to Israel he was running away," Gimpel said. "He was running away from anti-Semitism, away from persecution. When my family came back to Israel in 1991 we weren't running away anymore. We were running to Israel. We were running to serve, to protect, to pray, to love, to join the army, volunteer...we weren't running away, we were running to. That's [made] all the difference in the world."

To learn more about the AIFL, their programs including the Youth Ambassador Student Exchange (YASE) program, the U.S.-Israel Citizenship through Sports Exchange program, or to learn how you can help the AIFL grow, visit their website at: [www.aifl.org](http://www.aifl.org).

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