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Israeli calls for closer ties between America, Israel

By Jordan Burke

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SPANISH FORK — By day, Jeremy Gimpel, a U.S. born Israeli, hosts a radio show and writes for the Jerusalem Post. But away from his home in Israel, he more closely resembles a preacher, driving home his view that biblical Zionism can unite Americans and Israelis.

"Its time to come together," he said referring to the two countries. "When the terrorists are done with us, they're coming for you."

Gimpel's charge came Wednesday night when he addressed members of Utah's chapter of the American-Israeli Friendship League in Spanish Fork. For three and a half weeks, Gimpel is touring the United States at his own expense to share what he calls a "vision of unity." So far he's made about 25 appearances across the nation.

His speech, which mixed biblical verses with political ideologies, focused on why the United States should align itself with Israel.

"We're fighting the same battle on the same war," he said.

As tensions in the Middle East continue to attract worldwide attention, Gimpel's message is finding favor among pro-Israeli groups such as the American-Israeli Friendship League. The league's Utah chapter formally began last May and now has about 200 members, said Loraine Pace, the chapter president. The group, which is based in New York, now has four chapters nationwide.

Pace says the league wants to keep the U.S. and Israeli friendship alive. She said her group takes no political or partisan sides.

"Even though we're strong allies now, who knows what the future will hold," she said.

To spur involvement between Americans and Israelis, the league sponsors events including web chats and cultural exchange programs. In November, eight Israeli students will visit Utah for a week and will live with host families. They will also visit historical and political sites on the East coast. After that, eight Utah students will return with them to Israel on a similar schedule, acting as ambassadors for America, Pace said.

The exchanges, says Pace, help people realize that "its not just strangers across the water. Once you've gone there, there is a special tie."

Wednesday's speech also included comments via telephone from Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff, who is visiting Israel. Shurtleff went to the country along with other leaders from

the United States on a fact-finding mission.

"I've had a love affair with this country" since participating in Brigham Young University's study abroad program there, he said. The group will hold another fund-raiser on Friday, which will help fly Utah leaders to visit Israel, said organizer Matt Throckmorton.

"It's a conduit to help Americans understand Israel and vice versa," he said.

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