



CJCUC

**THE CENTER FOR
JEWISH-CHRISTIAN
UNDERSTANDING
AND COOPERATION**



OUR STORY

In January of 2008, a historical moment took place between the Synagogue and Church, when Rabbi Shlomo Riskin and David Nekrutman established the first Orthodox Jewish institution, the Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding & Cooperation (CJCUC), dedicated to religious dialogue, mutual understanding and active cooperation with Christians. In less than a decade, CJCUC has moved to the forefront of theological advancements in Jewish-Christian relations. CJCUC has changed the Jewish-Christian relational paradigm by engaging tens of thousands of Christians through Bible studies, developing Jewish theology with a positive understanding of Christianity and Christians, organizing faith based events that bring Jews and Christians together, and coordinating humanitarian aid for Christians in need.

Over the years, the CJCUC staff has educated Orthodox Jews regarding the importance of a Jewish-Christian alliance rooted in our common Judeo-Christian ethics. In 2015, CJCUC facilitated the first Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity, which more than 60 Orthodox Rabbis have signed. Members of CJCUC's staff officially represent the State of Israel on the International Jewish Committee for Inter-religious Consultations (IJCIC), which is the official dialogue partner with the Vatican, the World Council of Churches and Christian Orthodox Churches. CJCUC is also the leading member of the Israel Jewish Council on Inter-religious Relations (IJCIR). In 2011, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin was awarded the honorary title from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Goodwill Ambassador for Jewish-Christian Relations for the State of Israel.





HEBRAIC BIBLE STUDY ROOTS

Many Christians visit Israel as an expression of their support for the Jewish Homeland, and we, at CJCUC, understand the need for an institutional response to welcome these visitors. Realizing that the roots of Christian advocacy for Israel are based on Scriptures, CJCUC created a Bible study program to engage these Christian friends. Using an interactive text study approach, CJCUC staff members have been able to enhance the understanding between Jews and Christians. Sample sessions include: A Biblical Perspective on the Household, The Concept of Time in the Bible, The Revolution of Abraham, and The Kingdom of God.

In 2008, CJCUC began its Hebraic Roots Bible Study program with just a few hundred people and we are now engaged with thousands of Christian tourists each year. Since moving CJCUC's headquarters to the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem in 2016, we have expanded our study sessions to include the Jerusalem Christian community. In 2017, CJCUC launched Bible study sessions in Arabic to expand our work with the Christian Arab community in Israel.





DAY TO PRAISE

During Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) 2014, CJCUC created another positive chapter in Jewish-Christian relations by conducting a Psalm 113-118 (Hallel) worship service in an Orthodox synagogue. Hundreds of Christians attended the celebration. This Hallel service led to the launching of the Day to Praise, inviting Christians from around the world to recite this series of Psalms on Israel's Independence Day. Every Sukkot and Independence Day, CJCUC conducts Hallel services for Christians in Israel. Tens of thousands of Christians have participated in this initiative and many conduct Day to Praise church services in conjunction with this event. In addition, CJCUC has begun creating Hallel worship music in a style that resonates with Christians to promote prayer of these Psalms. In 2017, CJCUC published a commentary on the Hallel Psalms that focuses on how these Psalms can be applied to our lives today.

BLESSING BETHLEHEM



In the autumn of 2016, CJCUC launched “Blessing Bethlehem”, an initiative with a simple and urgent purpose: feeding the struggling and impoverished Christian Arabs of Bethlehem and the surrounding communities. This new campaign has been successful in raising support to provide weekly food deliveries of fresh fruits and vegetables to Christian families for this neglected community.

The historic nature of this program cannot be overstated: an Orthodox Jewish organization in Israel now spearheads a program to feed Christian Arabs who live under the difficult circumstances of rampant unemployment and frequent persecution in a majority Muslim population. Both the biblical mandate to care for the other in your midst as well as the real-life call for peace in the Holy Land underpins this groundbreaking charitable effort.



CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP ISRAEL MISSIONS

Due to our ever expanding network of contacts, CJCUC acutely understands the importance of bringing Christian leadership and students to Israel. We have partnered with the World Jewish Congress to bring young Catholic priests from Latin America to Israel so they can learn the fundamentals of Jewish-Catholic relations in the birthplace of our respective faith communities. CJCUC is instrumental in developing initiatives in which Christian millennials have an opportunity to visit Israel to understand the Jewish people and the real Israel as well as combat the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS) movement on American and European campuses. In 2017, CJCUC will launch its Christian Professors Israel Mission, bringing professors of Bible and Theology to Israel.

DEVELOPING NEW JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES

In December 2015, CJCUC sponsored, “To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians,” the first Orthodox Rabbinic statement since the monumental changes in Christian teachings about Jews and Judaism begun over 50 years ago. The statement outlines commonalities between Judaism and Christianity: the monotheism of Abraham, belief in the One Creator of Heaven and Earth who loves us all, the divinity of the Bible and the divine values of life, compassion and righteousness. It also insists that the emergence of Christianity in history is a divinely willed gift to the nations and that Jews and Christians have a common covenantal mission to perfect the world.

To date this statement has been signed by more than 60 Orthodox rabbis and has stimulated articles, seminars, lectures and conferences throughout Israel, United States and Europe to explore the theological and practical implications of this bold statement, and to further nurture sympathetic understanding between religious Christians and religious Jews.

Beyond the Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity, CJCUC realizes its groundbreaking efforts to promote Jewish-Christian understanding requires the development of contemporary theologies of the *Other* based on traditional rabbinic thought. In that effort, CJCUC has conducted a number of theological research projects between leading Jewish and Christian teachers and theologians to examine and extend the theological basis for our relationship. The results of these projects have been published in a number of original volumes.



OUR PUBLICATIONS



CUP OF SALVATION (2017) was inspired by CJCUC's Day to Praise event, where Jews and Christians come together to pray the Hallel, Psalms 113-118, during the Feast of Tabernacles and Israel's Independence Day. The commentary presents a new English translation of these praise psalms and also carefully explores the revealing grammar of the divine Hebrew text. It challenges us to understand the many aspects of the journey of worshipping God and praising Him in all that He does in our lives.



RETURNING TO ZION (2015) explores the religious significance for both Jews and Christians of the Jewish people's modern return to their ancient homeland. This book attempts to find a middle ground that accords theological meaning to the State of Israel, while avoiding messianic theories about the nature of Israel or its policies.



PLOWSHARES INTO SWORDS? (2014) explores the contemporary religious renaissance in world politics and culture. It analyzes contemporary religion's connection to violence, zealotry and extremism, which often characterizes belief today. Its essays by leading Jewish and Christian persons of faith offer directions for a theology of human cooperation and ethical values, and a vital constructive role for religion to play in ensuring that human life and culture flourish in the 21st century.



COVENANT AND HOPE (2012) explores the biblical idea of a religious covenant between God and humans, how it determines both Jewish and Christian religious commitments, behavior, and theology and how covenantal theology shapes relations with people outside their own religious communities. *Covenant and Hope* focuses on the foundations for religious hope, and how we can strengthen rational belief of hope for a better human future.

