

“The Crusade on Gaza”, Dr. Yali Hashash, “Woman-to-Woman Feminist Center”, Haifa, 30.6.2025

Description

The lecture explores the growing influence of the evangelical right—particularly Christian-Zionists—on Israeli politics and U.S.-Israel relations. Based on a year-long volunteer-led research project, it highlights how extremist religious ideologies—often anti-gender, white supremacist, and theocratic—shape evangelical support for Israel. These movements view Israel as the fulfillment of divine prophecy and a frontline in a global spiritual war. Prominent evangelical leaders fund settlements, support the Israeli government, and frame the war on Gaza as divine mission. Despite their radical rhetoric, they wield real political power, pushing a messianic Christian agenda that increasingly shapes Israeli policy—largely unnoticed by the broader public.

Introduction

Hello everyone, and welcome to today’s session of *Eyes on Gaza*, our daily gathering that blends protest with learning. Today, we will not be discussing the disgraceful and outrageous last-minute decision to disqualify Ayman Odeh from the Knesset—though we send him our full solidarity from here. Instead, we are joined by Dr. Yali Hashash, a historian and coordinator at *Isha L’Isha* – “Woman-to-Woman Feminist Center”, Haifa. Within the framework of the Center, she also leads the research and action group “Stop the Road to Armageddon”, which research the influence of American evangelical right-wing politics on Israeli affairs. As is our custom, Dr. Hashash will speak for around eight minutes, after which we’ll open the floor for discussion.

Lecture

Thank you very much, Ayelet, and thank you all for this incredibly important initiative.

The information I’ll be sharing today is the result of ongoing work by the women volunteers in our project, as well as various lectures we’ve hosted as part of it. Everyone is welcome to join us in this work. We began the project about a year ago, collecting material on the involvement of the evangelical right in Israel. One of the challenges has been simply finding the language to talk about this, because it all seems so extreme—so delusional—that it feels almost impossible to frame it within a rational political analysis.

Let me try to lay out a few basic points. First, what are the estimated numbers of evangelicals in the United States and globally? This is one of the most politically influential groups in the U.S. today—perhaps *the* most influential group among Christian nationalists. Within this category is a particularly significant subgroup: Christian Zionists. A recent study shows that 30% of the U.S. population are either Christian nationalists or aligned with its ideology. Of them, between 30 and 70 million identify as Christian Zionists. Globally, there are hundreds of millions of evangelicals—about 250 million who view Israel as the fulfillment of divine prophecy and identify themselves as “supporters of Israel.”

What is the agenda of the evangelical right? It can best be described as the Republican Party “on steroids,” marked by increasing religious encroachment on government. At its core is the rejection of the separation of church and state. The goal, ultimately, is for the United States—and eventually the world—to be governed according to biblical scripture, as interpreted by the evangelical right. This interpretation promotes Christian supremacy and, often, white supremacy as well. The movement is deeply anti-gender. When Donald Trump declared, “There are only men and women,” he was echoing the anti-gender ideology of this movement: family means father, mother, and children; abortion is murder; and critical race theory is forbidden. If racism exists today, they claim, it is directed against white people. Trump recently made repeated references to white farmers in South Africa supposedly suffering from racial persecution and anti-immigration policies. Many evangelicals adhere to “prosperity theology”: if you believe, donate, and support their preachers and churches, you will be rewarded with success.

Now, what about Christian Zionism, which commands so much global and American support? It divides into two major streams. The first is called *Dispensationalism*—a staged theory of divine prophecy. According to this view, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 marked a critical prophetic milestone. The 1967 war marked another. We are now in the stage of a great war between Israel and its enemies, which will culminate in the Second Coming of Christ. Within this view, the Jewish people play a central role—at least for now. The second, increasingly dominant stream within Christian Zionism, is more charismatic. It openly speaks of the conversion of the Jews. Whether converted or not, however, Jews do not have a hopeful destiny—except for the few righteous who will be redeemed.

The Christian crusade led by the evangelical right sees Israel as the military vanguard of Armageddon. The people living in Zion are cast as its soldiers. Let’s take a few examples. Michael D. Evans, founder of the Friends of Zion Museum in Jerusalem and a prominent evangelical figure, organized a mass solidarity event on the one-year anniversary of October 7, 2023. Broadcast to 250 million evangelical believers worldwide, the event declared that the world is in a battle of light versus darkness—and that Israel must win. Robert Stearns, another evangelical leader, compares radical Islam to Nazism. But while Nazism, he says, was confined to a specific place and a small defined group, radical Islam is a global virus. It’s not just Israel at war—it’s the entire world. Israel is the frontline in a global clash between barbarism and human rights. This rhetoric often seems too bizarre and extreme to take seriously in political analysis. But these are powerful actors. Many strongly support building the Third Temple. They are staunch supporters of the settlements. Their involvement in Israel is vast, as is their influence on American politics.

The fusion of these forces means that Israel is being steered by a Christian messianic agenda—largely without the public being aware. Consider, for instance, the ties between the Israeli government and evangelicals. Benjamin Netanyahu has given interviews to Paula White, a leading evangelical figure and head of the White House Faith Office in the Trump administration. In one interview, he claimed that Palestinians persecute Christians, citing Bethlehem as a city that emptied after it was transferred to the Palestinian Authority. He portrays Israel as the global protector of Christians, framing Israel and the U.S. as fighting a shared enemy: “We are fighting the same war.” Yossi Dagan, head of the Samaria Regional Council, along with other leaders of religious Zionism, are close allies of these figures. They meet frequently, raise funds from them, and use their influence to pressure Trump—for example, to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, even before Israel formally made such a demand.

And when it comes to Gaza—Johnnie Moore, a leading evangelical and former advisor to Trump, now the head of GHF (Gaza Humanitarian Foundation), is a Christian Zionist, a staunch homophobe, and sits on the board of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. For him, the fight against Hamas and the delivery of humanitarian aid are two sides of the same coin. Another example is Joel Rosenberg—an evangelical pastor, messianic Jew, and political advisor—who told TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network, a highly followed Christian network) that what’s happening in Gaza is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Zephaniah 2. Elsewhere, he has stated that Gazans brought this upon themselves, because God exacts vengeance on those who curse Israel—and that vengeance is the destruction now befalling Gaza.