



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

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EXCLUSIVE: Two Knesset members propose legislation to outlaw sharing the Gospel in Israel and send violators to prison – could it become law? | All Israel News

#bibleprophecy, #israel, #gospel, #law

Mar 19, 2023

Former Trump-Pence official warns bill poses massive threat to free speech, human rights and religious freedom

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL – Is it possible that the Israeli government this year could pass legislation making it illegal for people to share the Gospel message in the very land where Jesus was born, raised, preached, died, buried and rose from the dead?

Unfortunately, yes.

As Palm Sunday and Easter approach – the two most sacred days on the calendar for those who follow Jesus as both God and Messiah – two members of the Knesset (Israel's parliament) introduced a bill last week that would ban any and all efforts to tell people about Jesus.

The bill would send violators to prison.

Should it begin to gain traction inside the Knesset and begin moving towards passage, the bill could create a major new headache for Netanyahu's government by sparking a serious clash with Evangelical Christians in the United States and around the world who are among the biggest supporters of the State of Israel.

In the United States alone, there are some 60 million Evangelicals.

Globally, there are an estimated 600 million, [according](#) to the World Evangelical Alliance.

The bill could also draw sharp criticism from both Republicans and Democrats in Congress, in the executive branch, among U.S. governors and others who love Israel and have always stood with the Jewish state, but would fiercely oppose efforts to silence followers of Jesus in the Holy Land.

Former U.S. Ambassador of International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback – who served during the Trump-Pence administration – is the first American leader to publicly warn that this new bill poses a massive threat to free speech, human rights and religious freedom.

On Friday, ALL ISRAEL NEWS emailed Brownback – a long-time and consistent friend and supporter of Israel – a professional translation of the bill in English, which was originally written in Hebrew, of course.

Surprised and concerned, the ambassador replied with the following statement:

“Free and democratic countries simply do not outlaw the free exchange of ideas and that includes religious beliefs and convictions. Article 18 of the Universal Charter of Human Rights – which Israel has signed onto – guarantees freedom of religion, including the right to decide your own faith beliefs.”

WHAT DOES THE NEW BILL ACTUALLY SAY?

The proposed legislation would outlaw all efforts by people of one faith who, in any way, want to discuss or try to persuade people of other faiths to consider changing their current religious beliefs.

The punishment for doing so would be “one year imprisonment.”

If the conversation is with minor – someone under the age of 18 – the punishment would be “two years imprisonment.”

This bill would apply to people having spiritual conversations with Israelis of any religion.

However, in their official explanation of the bill, the two Israeli legislators specifically emphasized the warning to stop Christians, in particular.

The bill’s primary objective, therefore, appears to be making it illegal for followers of Jesus (“Yeshua” in Hebrew) to explain why they believe that Jesus is both Messiah and God with the hope that Israelis might consider following Him.

The bill does not only make a simple personal conversation about Jesus with another individual a crime.

It would also make it illegal for “someone who solicits a person – directly, digitally, by mail or online – in order to convert his religion.”

Thus, producing and publishing online videos explaining the Gospel to Jewish or Muslim people in Israel – and to those of any other religious faiths – would suddenly become illegal.

Publishing books, other printed literature, online articles, podcasts, or other forms of media that explains the life and ministry of Jesus and His message found in the New Testament would also become illegal.

So would discussing the Gospel message via email, text messages, written letters and/or on social media, including answering questions initiated by people who don’t follow Jesus.

[\[To read a professional translation of the bill – and its authors' description of the bill's intent – in English, please click here.\]](#)

[\[To read the bill and its description in the original Hebrew, please click here.\]](#)

It is already a crime in Israel to try to proselytize minors or bribe people of any age with money or material goods to change their religious views.

But this new legislation seeks to go much further.

“At times these attempts do not involve monetary promises or material gains and are therefore not illegal according to the current law,” the bill notes, “but the many negative repercussions, including psychological damages, warrant the intervention of the legislature.”

“Therefore, it is proposed that, alongside the prohibition of giving favors as an incentive to convert religion, also prohibited will be the act of solicitation to convert religion, when it is done directly to a person,” whether that be face-to-face or via any other means of communication.

WHO WROTE THIS ANTI-CHRISTIAN LEGISLATION?

The authors of this legislation, [Moshe Gafni](#) and [Yaakov Asher](#), are ultra-Orthodox Jewish members of Knesset.

Both are members of United Torah Judaism (UTJ), a Haredi (highly religious) political party holding a total of seven out of 120 seats in the current Knesset.

And both are influential voices – and important votes – inside the 64-seat governing coalition led by Netanyahu.

Gafni is 70 years old. He was first elected to the Knesset in 1988 and has served almost continuously since then. Today, he serves as the chairperson of the Knesset's powerful Finance Committee, as well as a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and the Joint Committee for the Defense Budget.

Asher, age 57, was first elected to parliament in 2013. Today, he serves as chairperson of the Knesset's Internal Affairs and Environment Protection Committee.

Gafni has a long history of opposing followers of Jesus.

He first introduced legislation to impose a legal ban on evangelism in Israel back in 1999.

His bill went nowhere, but Gafni has repeatedly re-introduced versions of his legislation ever since.

WILL NETANYAHU – A GREAT FRIEND OF EVANGELICALS – ALLOW SUCH ANTI-CHRISTIAN LEGISLATION TO PASS?

To his credit, Netanyahu has never allowed such legislation to advance or be approved in the past.

Nor has his center-right Likud party.

Why?

Because Netanyahu and most, if not all, members of the Likud party have always demonstrated that they are adamant about preserving and protecting the Jewish state as a liberal democracy.

They have always believed that even unpopular views must be allowed to be held and voiced in Israel, and that the rights of religious and ethnic minorities must be protected under the rule of law.

Netanyahu and Likud have, therefore, rejected such explicit breaches of freedom of speech, blatant violations of religious freedom and aggressive assaults on fundamental human rights.

What's more, Netanyahu has proven himself as a great friend of Evangelical Christians over the past three decades

While he does not agree theologically with Evangelicals about who Jesus is, Netanyahu has long viewed the Evangelical community as a true blessing and a strategic asset to the State of Israel and to the Jewish people worldwide.

That's why for three decades Netanyahu has actively and consistently courted and cultivated strong support for Israel among Evangelical Christians, of which there are some 60 million in the United States and some 600 million worldwide.

Netanyahu meets regularly with Christian leaders from a wide range of denominations, and often speaks at Christian conferences and forums, including at the "Christian Media Summit," organized by Israel's Government Press Office each year in Jerusalem.

Just last year, I brought a delegation of Evangelical business and media leaders to meet with Netanyahu at the Knesset.

During his book tour several months ago, Netanyahu also spoke on numerous Christian TV networks, including TBN and CBN, the two most viewed Evangelical networks in the United States.

WHY COULD THIS YEAR BE DIFFERENT?

That said, Evangelical and Messianic Jewish leaders who have spoken to ALL ISRAEL NEWS in recent days say they are concerned that in the present political environment the legislation introduced by Gafni and Asher could actually become law.

They note that out of the 120-seat Knesset, the current government coalition is comprised of a large number of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox members.

These members are far more aggressive in this legislative session than ever before in pushing for legislations to be passed that advance their theological worldview.

And these members appear to believe that Netanyahu cannot afford to lose their votes if he hopes to remain prime minister and hopes to advance his other important policy priorities, including stopping the Iranian regime from building nuclear weapons, making peace with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, strengthening and expanding the Israeli economy (especially as the U.S. economy slows), and passing sweeping judicial reforms.

Indeed, the current judicial reform movement raises further concerns for Evangelical and Messianic Jewish leaders.

Many believe reforms are, in fact, needed to improve Israel's flawed legal system.

However, they worry that if the Knesset passes an extreme version of an "override clause" – one of the most controversial and hotly-debated of the proposed reforms which would allow the Knesset to override Israeli Supreme Court decisions with a simple majority vote of just 61 out of 120 Members – this could severely endanger the human rights and civil liberties of all minorities in the country, including religious minorities, such as followers of Jesus.

It would be a different matter if the "override clause" required a supermajority of, say, 90 seats in the Knesset to pass legislation previously struck down by the Supreme Court.

Even a compromise on the "override clause" issue could be both positive and acceptable, where the final legislation requires less than 90 votes but far more than 61 to overturn a Supreme Court decision.

But legislation that would allow a simple majority to overrule the High Court, they believe, poses a serious threat for a number of reasons.

For example, if the Gafni-Asher bill becomes law, the Supreme Court would likely strike it down as a violation of free speech, basic human rights and freedom of religion.

However, if the currently-proposed version of the "override clause" also becomes law, then a simple majority of just 61 Knesset members would be able to cancel the High Court's decision.

That would enable the current Knesset to go forward with banning all forms of evangelism in Israel and would provide no legal recourse whatsoever to Jewish and Gentile people – Israelis or foreigners – who love Jesus and want to tell others about Him.

This is a major and disturbing new development in the country and one that ALL ISRAEL NEWS will be covering closely.

US left out as China, Iran come out on top in latest deal with Saudi Arabia: 'Sign of the times' (yahoo.com)

#bibleprophecy, #china, #iran, #america

Mar 21, 2023

After years of hostile and frayed [relations, Iran and Saudi Arabia](#) have agreed to reestablish diplomatic ties and reopen mutual embassies – a deal reportedly brokered by China that has raised eyebrows across the globe.

Over the weekend, Iran claimed that Saudi Arabia extended an invitation to Tehran for a state visit, but details surrounding the meeting remain unclear.

Since news of the deal emerged, concerns have mounted over what this newly repaired relationship could mean amid failed U.S.-Iran nuclear talks, Israeli attempts to normalize ties with regional neighbors under the Abraham Accords, and China's growing influence in the Middle East.

The March 10 agreement between Tehran and Riyadh not only brought renewed light to the [complex dynamics that have flourished](#) within the Middle East for decades, it also depicted how tense U.S.-China relations are shaping foreign policy across the globe.

"The Chinese are keen to actually make this look like a zero-sum – the Chinese win, America loses," Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior fellow with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told Fox News Digital. "They want to have the impact of this agreement do things for them in the policy space."

"That means the slow erosion of the U.S. force posture in the region, the slow erosion of the U.S.-led order in the region," he said.

In addition, China has a vested interest in ensuring stability between Saudi Arabia and Iran as they are both its largest trading partners in the Persian Gulf.

Tehran also has a lot to win with the new agreement.

After being the region's pariah state for years and facing down increased pressure from the West over its development of nuclear weapons along with aid to Russia amid the war in Ukraine, Tehran is looking to repair ties with its neighbors.

Repairing geopolitical relations in the Middle East would not only serve as a boost to its economy, it could also position Tehran with more influence over regional matters like the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

CHINA, RUSSIA, IRAN TEAM UP FOR MILITARY EXERCISES IN MIDDLE EAST

Under the Abraham Accords, which were brokered by the U.S. beginning in 2020, Israel began normalizing ties with Middle Eastern nations like Bahrain and [the United Arab Emirates \(UAE\)](#), but these nations have also begun repairing ties with Iran – throwing into question Israel's regional security.

"Iran is trying ... to break out of this land of isolation that the Abraham Accords had imposed on it by saying to the world, 'I beat Jerusalem to Riyadh,'" Taleblu said, noting that Saudi Arabia has not yet signed on to normalize ties with Israel. "It's trying to downgrade or devalue the Abraham Accords and counter its expansion."

But the Middle Eastern expert also said that Iran has a long-term goal that it is ultimately working toward – ending U.S. influence in the region.

"The Iranian modus operandi has been to divorce some of these GCC countries from their external patron," he said in reference to the Gulf Cooperation Council, a trading block made up of the region's top economic players like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar. "Which is a military, diplomatic and economic rope-a-dope."

"It doesn't mean it's over. It doesn't mean those countries don't believe in U.S. power. It means that the regime in Tehran is trying to capitalize on it. And of course, the Chinese are trying to capitalize on it," he added.

But it's not only the U.S. and Israel that Taleblu argued did not necessarily come out on top in the latest deal.

Saudi Arabia also does not stand to gain as much as Iran or even China from the agreement.

While Riyadh also could see financial benefits from regional security, a trade partnership with Tehran and in [appeasing wishes from Beijing](#) to settle relations in the Middle East, some of its top issues with Iran are unlikely to be resolved.

Saudi Arabia has been engaged in a proxy war against Iran in Yemen since 2015 and in Syria since at least 2013.

"There is no evidence to suggest that Tehran will all of a sudden do a 180 on some of its most accessible elements of its border and security policy – which is the proxy strategy," Taleblu said. "If the Saudis think that by opening an embassy this is a release valve for the conflicts ... they may have another thing coming."

CHINA DENIES HIDDEN MOTIVES AFTER BROKERING TALKS BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN

Taleblu argued that ultimately this agreement is a "sign of the times" and shows that U.S. partners in the Middle East are increasingly stepping back from Washington's influence.

Partners across the globe, including in the Middle East, are not necessarily looking to sever ties with Washington but are looking out for the best interests of their own nations, even if that means expanding trade and economic ties with the U.S.'s top adversary – China.

"[Washington] is going to have to take off the glasses that say that great power competition is still pieced, or segmented or highly regionalized," Taleblu said. "No, great power competition is a global phenomenon."

But ultimately the Middle Eastern expert warned against overreacting to the deal and pointed out that a panicked response is exactly what China and Iran are hoping for.

"They're hoping to have this concern spark something politically, such that the U.S.-Saudi relationship – which is a [little bit on the rocks](#) – ends up becoming a U.S.-Saudi divorce," he said. "People are projecting their views onto this deal, and the more they project their views, the more there is concern, panic and chaos."

While the agreement appears like a loss for the U.S., Israel and even Saudi Arabia to an extent, Taleblu argued it may not play out this way in the long run.

The expert said the U.S. needs to improve its relationship with Riyadh and then work on expanding the Abraham Accords, noting that Saudi Arabia has cleverly positioned itself when it comes to dealing with a volatile Tehran, which is beholden to trade with Beijing.

"This is akin to a schoolyard fight between Saudi Arabia and Iran," Taleblu said. "Saudi Arabia, rather than calling the principal, which can punish Iran – the principal [being] the U.S. – Saudi Arabia's just calling Iran's parents – China – which may potentially be able to restrain Iran."

Report: 43,000 estimated dead in Somalia drought last year | AP News

#bibleprophecy, #famine, #drought, #somalia

Mar 20, 2023

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — A new report says an estimated 43,000 people died amid Somalia's [longest drought](#) on record last year and half of them likely were children under 5 years old.

It is the first official death toll announced in the drought withering large parts of the Horn of Africa.

At least 18,000 people, and as many as 34,000, are forecast to die in the first six months of this year.

"The current crisis is far from over," says the report released Monday by the World Health Organization and the United Nations children's agency and carried out by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Somalia and neighboring Ethiopia and Kenya are facing a sixth consecutive failed rainy season while rising global food prices and the [war in Ukraine](#) complicate the hunger crisis.

The U.N. and partners [earlier this year](#) said they were no longer forecasting a formal famine declaration for Somalia for now but called the situation "extremely critical" with more than 6 million people hungry in that country alone.

Famine is the extreme lack of food and a significant death rate from outright starvation or malnutrition combined with diseases like cholera. A formal famine declaration means data shows more than a fifth of households have extreme food gaps, more than 30% of children are acutely malnourished and over two people out of 10,000 are dying every day.

"The risk of famine still remains," the U.N. resident coordinator in Somalia, Adam Abdelmoula, told journalists on Monday.

Some humanitarian and climate officials this year [have warned](#) that trends are worse than in the 2011 famine in Somalia in which a quarter-million people died.

"The death rate was increasing as the year came to a close," London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine professor Francesco Checchi told journalists. The hardest-hit populations are in Bay and Bakool in southwest Somalia and displaced people who have fled to the capital, Mogadishu.

Millions of livestock have died in the current crisis compounded by climate change and insecurity as [Somalia battles thousands of fighters](#) with al-Qaida's East Africa affiliate,

al-Shabab. The U.N. migration agency says 3.8 million people are displaced, a record high.

A food security assessment released last month said nearly a half-million children in Somalia are likely to be severely malnourished this year.

This time, the world is looking elsewhere, many humanitarian officials say.

“Many of the traditional donors have washed their hands and [focused on Ukraine](#),” the U.N. resident coordinator told the visiting U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Linda Thomas-Greenfield, during a briefing in Mogadishu in January.

Los Angeles area hit by tornado | CNN

#bibleprophecy, #tornado, #california

Mar 20, 2023

Los Angeles area hit by rare tornado – the strongest one to hit the county since 1983

At least one person was injured after a rare [tornado](#) hit a city just southeast of Los Angeles Wednesday, local officials said.

The National Weather Service confirmed the tornado “briefly touched down” in an industrial park and warehouse district in the city of Montebello and rated the tornado an EF-1 with estimated peak winds of 110 mph – the strongest tornado to hit the Los Angeles area since 1983.

The “intense microcell” damaged at least 17 buildings, 11 so severely the fire department deemed them too dangerous to use, according to Michael Chee, a city public information officer.

“There was flying debris and everything!!!!” [tweeted](#) one person who shared a video of the storm. The video zooms in on a mass of dark gray clouds consuming the sky and tapering down toward land.

The reported injury is considered minor, Chee said at a news conference.

The tornado collapsed one building’s roof, snapped a power pole, ejected an HVAC unit from the top of a building, broke skylights, damaged cars and uprooted a healthy pine tree with a 1-foot wide trunk, the weather service reported after assessing the storm damage in Montebello Wednesday.

At least one commercial building was damaged in the storm Wednesday.

Tornadoes are rare in California, with fewer than 10 per year on average, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Most tornadoes in the state are small and short lived.

They are commonly referred to as landspouts (similar to a waterspout, but over land). These differ from more traditional tornadoes that form from rotating thunderstorms, like those common in the Central Plains and the Southeast. While landspouts can cause damage, it is generally not extensive or severe.

On Tuesday evening, a weak tornado hit a mobile home park in Carpinteria – a seaside city northwest of Los Angeles, the weather service confirmed Wednesday. The service rated it as an EF-0, with winds of 75 mph.

The tornado damaged 25 mobile home units in the Sandpiper Village mobile home park and caused minor tree damage to an adjacent cemetery.

Additional video of the Montebello storm shows a swirling cloud of black debris as the roof of a nearby building gets blown off. Vehicles can be seen with damage and shattered windows.

“The roof came off this building,” a witness says as he records a parking lot full of damaged vehicles.

“This is stuff you see in Ohio, Arkansas... Not Montebello,” another witness is heard saying.

Wednesday’s intense weather comes as California has been plagued in recent months by at least [12 atmospheric rivers](#) that have brought devastating flooding and hurricane-force winds. An atmospheric river is like a fire hose that carries saturated air from the tropics to higher latitudes, dumping relentless rain or snow.

At least five people died due to the storm in the San Francisco Bay Area as fierce winds lashed cities on Tuesday, toppling trees and power lines. The city of San Francisco said its 911 call center had four times its normal call volume during the peak of the storm, which resulted in over 700 fallen trees and limbs and reports of glass and debris falling from high rise towers.

Hillsong Church operated lucrative honorarium scheme: report | Church & Ministries News (christianpost.com)

#bibleprophecy, #church, #hillsong, #schemes

Mar 16, 2023

[INSANE New Hillsong allegations | Carl Lentz, Brian Houston, TD Jakes, Joyce Meyer, Justin Bieber.](#)



Hillsong Church operated an honorarium scheme that netted as much as \$1 million in additional and sometimes tax-free income annually for celebrity preachers worldwide, including founders Brian Houston and his wife, Bobbie, and famous author and evangelist Christine Caine, a new whistleblowers report alleges.

In [an address to parishioners](#) on Sunday about a [report](#) accusing Hillsong leaders of money laundering, tax evasion and shopping sprees that would "embarrass a Kardashian," including the alleged honorarium scheme, Phil Dooley, the megachurch's global senior pastor who has been implicated as a "small fry" participant, denied being part of any scheme and announced changes to their honorarium policy.

"If mistakes were made, we will be upfront about them. We will not shy away from them. We will own them as a church," said Dooley, who noted that the church's finances were still undergoing a forensic audit by accounting firm [Grant Thornton](#).

The alleged honorarium scheme was reportedly so lucrative that some churches, like the Judah Smith-led [Churchome](#) in Washington state, paid up to \$100,000 annually in membership fees to be part of a network called [Hillsong Family](#) to gain access to the coveted preaching circuit where pastors would travel and dine in luxury at the expense of host churches in the network.

They would also collect generous honorariums of up to \$20,000 or more for "a couple of 30 minute sermons," according to a 44-page summary of [the whistleblower's report](#) reviewed by The Christian Post.

"Mega-church celebrity pastors can earn over one million dollars per year from this 'scam,'" added the report, which was completed in October 2022 and [first made public on March 9](#) by [Andrew Wilkie](#), an independent member of the Australian Parliament, who branded Brian and Bobbie Houston and Christine Caine as "some of the 'OGs' of this abuse of church funds."

"In essence, one megachurch pastor who is the founder of (sic) Church from their own church (the host church), invites a founding celebrity pastor of another megachurch to speak at their church or event. For this, the host pays for business or first-class flights for the guest pastor, along with luxury accommodation, restaurant meals, gifts and green room comfort," the whistleblower explains.

"The icing on the cake is the payment of a generous honorarium (around \$10k to \$20k or more) to the visiting celebrity pastor to preach a couple of 30-minute sermons. In addition, the visiting pastor receives royalties from the sale of his or her resources at the church service or event. This arrangement is then reciprocated," the whistleblower continues. "That is, the original celebrity preacher guest subsequently invites the celebrity pastor from the host church to come to their church or event to preach and offers all of the same benefits they had received."

For celebrity preachers like Brian and Bobbie Houston, who were reportedly being paid about \$1 million collectively by Hillsong Church in regular income, the scheme only made them richer at the expense of the churches they serve, the whistleblower argues.

"The problem with this arrangement is that it is church money which pays for the honorarium, flights, accommodation etc., yet the pastor receives the honorarium into their personal pocket. This scam means that Australian tax-exempt church income is being used to make celebrity pastors personally wealthy," the report explains. "The mega-wealthy pastors of the world's largest mega churches are all 'in on it' by continually inviting each other to speak at their church services and events. They are effectively lining each other's personal pockets and enabling luxurious lifestyles — all with church money sacrificially donated by the general public who are not wealthy."

Caine's [Equip & Empower Ministries, Inc](#), did not respond to calls from CP for comment on the report Hillsong Church previously branded as "[out of context](#)." When contacted for comment about the scheme and the Hillsong Family network, a spokesperson for Churchome said the church was no longer affiliated with Hillsong Church.

"We were a member of the Hillsong Family but we ended our affiliation with them in January of 2022. Beyond that, we have no further comment," the church said in a statement to CP.

According to [Hillsong Church's website](#), "The HILLSONG FAMILY is a group of like-spirited, forward thinking, kingdom-building visionaries and ministries working TOGETHER for a greater cause. This group of churches and ministries are joining our 'FAMILY' in an effort to develop and strengthen one another — a family relationship in

which to find wisdom and encouragement, spiritual accountability and support as they continue to build the church and ministry that God has uniquely called them to do."

For Hillsong Church, this family relationship is also an income generator due to the membership fees associated with being a part of the Hillsong Family.

"Non-Hillsong churches around the world who are members of the 'Hillsong Family.' These churches 'donate' 3% of their total annual tithes income in 'membership fees' to Hillsong each year, capped at \$100k, in return for the privilege of being able to call themselves Hillsong Family churches and attend the exclusive Hillsong Family Gathering twice per year at an overseas location," the whistleblower noted.

In Australia, pastors [do not have to include honorariums](#) on their annual tax returns. In the U.S., however, honorariums have to be reported as income, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

"Regardless of whether you're a minister performing ministerial services as an employee or a self-employed person, all of your earnings, including wages, offerings, and fees you receive for performing marriages, baptisms, funerals, etc., are subject to income tax," [the IRS says](#).

While Dooley is described as a "small fry" in the honorarium scheme, he "has been a regular and willing participant in the reciprocal preacher's circuit whereby celebrity preachers and 'worship' pastors (i.e. musicians) earn hefty tax-free honorariums for speaking engagements at both Hillsong and non-Hillsong church campuses and events around the world — all while at the same time being paid a full-time salary from Hillsong for performing a full-time job," according to the report.

The report claims that Dooley collected \$70,000 in honorarium income from July 2019 to June 2020 and banked it all in his personal charity, Live the Adventure. From 2013 to 2014, receipts show Dooley collected \$90,000.

In addressing the honorarium scheme, Dooley said on Sunday that he received honorariums in the past but never asked for any.

"[The] information ... states that I was part of a celebrity preachers' reciprocal honorarium rort, and then mentions that I received honorariums. This is fully declared income and the small sums we've received by way of honorarium are declared, as is required by law, and I would be very happy to share that information with Mr. Wilkie," Dooley said.

"I've never asked for an honorarium and never expected an honorarium for speaking. And I want to say to our congregation here in Australia, look at how your pastors live. Does it look lavish? Or does it look like they have good, honest, hardworking people doing their best as ministers of the Gospel of Jesus to serve their communities and congregants while also raising their own families?" he asked.

He further said that he had no desire to be on any preaching circuit for personal benefit.

"I also want to be clear that in my role, I have no intention of being on this circuit, of being invited and traveling to speak at conferences so I can gain personally from this. In fact, we have a policy that holds Lucinda and I accountable for all our traveling ministry. And we are happy with that because it protects us and looks after our well-being," Dooley added.

"Our focus is our church, not the circuit. And in line with this, in October, we updated our gifts policy and our honorariums policy. And Lucinda and I, stepping into this role full time from February this year, any honorariums we received go back to church," he insisted. "We're scrutinizing every expense to ensure that it is going to effective mission focus ministry endeavors."

Honorariums, the whistleblower alleges in the report, have been a massive burden on Hillsong conferences, causing the church to end up with budget deficits for these events frequently. For Hillsong Church's Color Conference and Worship and Creative Conference in 2021, for example, the church had a deficit of some \$1 million.

"It is not uncommon for Hillsong's conference to make a loss, even in years not affected by COVID-19 when the conference is held in person," the report says. "Donations are sought from the conference attendees to help cover the cost of the conference, but what the attendees do not know is that the reason the conferences make a loss is due to the excessive amounts of honorariums Hillsong pays to the celebrity pastors they invite to speak at the conference, the excessive travel costs of these guests and other entitlements such as green room catering and gifts for guests."

The report further alleges that whenever Hillsong runs deficits on these conferences, they are usually cleared with church donations.

"What the people who donate also do not know is that the money they contribute to Hillsong in the form of their weekly tithes is being used to back-fill the conference budget deficit. So essentially, Hillsong congregation members are sacrificing things in their personal lives to pay for designer gifts and large cash honorariums for celebrity pastors who are already mega-rich," the report says.

Honorariums have long been a contentious discussion point worldwide, with some, like Pastor Wilfred O. Jibril of Nigeria, arguing that honorariums are "contrary to the will of God."

"It is an open secret that when ministers are invited to preach in churches other than theirs, they collect honorarium at the end of the message. These ministers are worse than policemen at chop points as they often harass their host ministers until they are 'settled,'" Jibril wrote in a 2011 piece for the [Nigerian Voice](#).

"To say that these ministers are a disgrace to the Lord Jesus Christ is, to put it mildly. There is no biblical provision for the collection of honorarium by ministers. In fact, in

Matthew 10:8, the Lord admonishes ministers: 'Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.' From this verse of the scripture, it is obvious that collection of honorarium by ministers is an act of disobedience to the commandment of the Lord and it is tantamount to commercializing the gospel which is antithetical to the great commission the Lord Jesus Christ has given to us."

[John G. Stackhouse Jr.](#), the Samuel J. Mikolaski professor of religious studies at Crandall University in Canada, who also serves as dean of faculty development, believes churches should pay for the services they receive. He contends that the Apostle Paul is clear that "the worker deserves his wages" (I Tim. 5:18) and that what someone is already being paid by someone else (their home congregation) is their business, not the business of those who are receiving their services.

"I run into this all the time. 'You already get a salary from Crandall University!' Yes, and they pay me to work for them. If you want me to work for you, then you pay for that — since I will be working overtime to work for you on top of my full-time obligation to them," he told CP in a statement when asked if highly paid traveling preachers should still collect honorariums for preaching the Gospel.

Stackhouse added that how much honorarium is paid depends on what the preacher is willing to accept.

"Speakers don't just stand up and talk for 30 minutes. Their total work to give that message is a total of hours in research and composition plus time spent at your church instead of where else they might be. (Surgeons get paid a lot per operating room hour also, but it's not as if you're paying only for their time in the O.R.)," he said.

"The visiting preacher has his or her own choices to make. ... He can receive the honorarium and then donate it back to the church. He can tell them in advance that he is happy to work pro bono, or he can receive the honorarium as payment for services rendered and spend it as he sees fit — perhaps to bless his family, who had to do without him that weekend; perhaps to afford to be able to work pro bono for a poorer church; perhaps to help someone else he knows who speaks for far smaller fees; and so on," he explained. "What he decides to do, however, is truly his business. Churches who want to enjoy the work of professionals should pay those professionals — contractors, plumbers, lawyers or preachers."

Former baseball star Darryl Strawberry is now an evangelical preacher promoting Israel | ערוץ 7 (israelnationalnews.com)

#bibleprophecy, baseball, preacher, #israel

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Former New York Mets star Darryl Strawberry spoke at a pro-Israel event in his second career as an evangelical minister.

As part of his journey after a tumultuous decade and a half in the spotlight, former New York Mets star Darryl Strawberry spoke at a pro-Israel event last week in his second career as an evangelical minister.

Strawberry, an eight-time MLB All-Star-turned-traveling-preacher, was a panelist last Thursday at Extending the Branches of Zionism, an event taking place in New York City and organized by the Jewish National Fund-USA focused on support for Israel among non-Jews.

The panel included participants from two JNF-USA programs that Strawberry supports called the Caravan for Democracy Student Leadership Mission and the Faculty Fellowship Program in Israel. Both bring non-Jews on Birthright-style trips with the intention of having participants subsequently discuss Israel on college campuses.

“I think the most important thing is, as a non-Jewish person, you have to be able to educate them about Israel,” Strawberry told the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* on a Zoom call. “I think in this country, a lot of people talk about Israel, and talk about the Jewish people, but they’ve never been there. So they don’t even have a clue.”

Strawberry, 60, was a New York sports icon in the 1980s as a leading member of the 1986 World Series champion Mets. With a picturesque, looping swing, the lanky 6-foot-6 outfielder could both hit for power and show off speed on the bases, drawing early predictions from sports analysts that he was destined to be an all-time great.

But Strawberry instead became a poster child for the team’s hard-partying ways, and he and fellow phenom Dwight “Doc” Gooden saw their careers hampered by drug addiction and scandal. Strawberry’s downfall included multiple stays in drug and alcohol rehab centers; multiple surgeries for colon cancer and losing his left kidney; and a charge for getting caught soliciting a prostitute in 1999, the last year he would play professional baseball.

Soon after that, Strawberry began attending an evangelical church and spent seven years “being disciplined,” or learning from a teacher steeped in evangelical knowledge.

“I would have never thought that was the true calling in my life,” Strawberry said. “And I would have a chance to experience the true meaning of life and be able to go to places I always wanted to go.”

In 2018, one of those places turned out to be Israel, a country he says he knew nothing about until his years of religious study.

“Once I finally got there, it was like, ‘Oh, my God, it is so beautiful.’ It’s so amazing, to be able to experience something that I’ve read so much about, and to be able to walk those grounds,” he said.

Evangelical Christianity stresses the importance of being “born again,” or having a spiritual awakening centered on faith in Jesus. Evangelicals have at different points over the past two decades made up close to a quarter of the U.S. population.

Many also believe that the modern state of Israel is a fulfillment of God’s promise to give the land to the Jewish people. Christian Zionist movements such as Christians United for Israel, a group that claims about 11 million members, have played a significant role in the Republican Party’s strong support of Israel.

For years, Strawberry — who is based at the nondenominational Journey Church in Troy, Missouri, about 50 miles west of St. Louis — has given sermons at megachurches and talked about his recovery story. More recently, he has also talked with prison inmates about turning their lives around. But promoting Israel has become a main focus for the Straw Man.

He demurred when asked for his thoughts on the country’s new government.

“I keep it separated from the politics,” Strawberry said about his Israel advocacy. “I know what it’s about — it’s about the people, and it’s about the culture there. That’s what I know, and nobody else can tell me any different.

“I went there and saw, you know, the Sea of Galilee,” he added. “These are real places, you know? These are real places, and [biblical] things happened there in real time.”

New York Yankees Hall of Fame pitcher Mariano Rivera — who was Strawberry’s teammates in the late 1990s as a member of multiple World Series-winning teams — is also an evangelical Israel supporter. Strawberry said the two are friends and have bonded over their shared religion.

Strawberry wants to soon return to Israel, where he visited the Western Wall and was surprised that people knew who he was. Baseball is not a popular sport there, lagging far behind others such as soccer and basketball.

“I was blown away. I was like, ‘how did they know me over here?’” Strawberry said.

For now, Strawberry said he might track how Team Israel does in the upcoming World Baseball Classic tournament.

“How cool is that?” he said about the team qualifying. “That should be exciting, it’s an exciting time for them to be playing in that.”