

Menorah dedicated at Cornerstone Church in San Antonio

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To give thanks for his years of support for Israel and the Jewish people, a group of friends of Pastor John Hagee from the San Antonio and Houston Jewish communities dedicated a menorah to Pastor John and Diana Hagee at Cornerstone Church in San Antonio on Sunday, Dec. 6. Invited guests and participants attended the dedication.

Fifty families and individuals came together to contribute for the fabrication of a 7-foot-tall copper menorah, which now stands in front of the church as a permanent acknowledgement of the Hagees' dedication to the Jewish community. The menorah has a base of marble and a gas and electric flame that will burn perpetually. It is a signed original piece by Ascalon Studios in New Jersey.

A plaque on the base reads,

“ ‘For the sake of Zion, I will not be silent, for the sake of Jerusalem I will not be still, till her victory emerge resplendent and her triumph like a flaming torch.’ Isaiah 62:1. To Pastor John & Diana Hagee: In grateful appreciation of your friendship and support, loyalty and courage. You have given light and hope to so many.”

“We wanted to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Hagees for their support of Israel and the Jewish people around the world,” said Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg of Congregation Rodfei Sholom, an Orthodox synagogue in San Antonio. “Their support is not only financial, it’s political and spiritual.”

In 1981, the Hagees started a “Night to Honor Israel” which raises millions of dollars each year for many Israeli organizations. In 2009, John Hagee Ministries gave \$9 million through the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston to agencies such as Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon for a bomb-proof children’s unit; Migdal Ohr, to care for Israeli orphans; and the Jewish Agency for Israel, for various projects. Throughout the year, John Hagee Ministries raises money for Jewish and Israeli causes and distributes it at the annual event at his San Antonio church. Similar events have been held in more than 80 cities across the country, and in the State of Israel. Since 1981, the Night to Honor Israel has raised \$58 million for agencies and organizations in Israel.



Robi Jalnos, Yuda Doliner, Israel Fogiel, Pastor John Hagee, Diana Hagee, Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg, Arthur Riklin, Melvin Dow and Lee Wunsch, gathered in front of the menorah after the dedication ceremony at Cornerstone Church on Dec. 6. The group surrounding the Hagees organized the fundraising effort for the gift to thank Pastor Hagee for his years of support for Israel and the Jewish people.

When Pastor John and Diana Hagee visited Israel in 1978, according to Pastor Hagee, he “went to Israel as a tourist and came back as a Zionist.” In June 1981, Israel bombed the nuclear facility in Iraq, and was criticized for its actions. That is when Pastor Hagee told Diana that he wanted to do something to honor the Jewish state. His idea of a Night to Honor Israel was presented to the San Antonio Jewish community, via a meeting with the then-executive director of the Jewish Federation. A committee was appointed. The members agreed, and appreciated Pastor Hagee’s desire to honor the State of Israel.

On Sept. 10, 1981, Pastor Hagee held the first Night to Honor Israel at the Majestic Theater in San Antonio. Arthur Riklin, who along with Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg, is one of the only two living members of the committee that approved the Night to Honor Israel, said they learned that bomb threats had been made on that first night, but that did not stop Pastor Hagee from continuing the event that evening and for the next 27 years.

Since the beginning, “Hagee has stayed true to his word that he really believes in the State of Israel because of Scriptures, and he never has tried to proselytize,” Riklin said.

About a year ago, when Pastor Hagee was celebrating the 50th anniversary of his ministry, Israel Fogiel came up with the idea for a menorah to honor the Hagees’ work. Both Rabbi Scheinberg and Riklin thought it was a great gesture.

Rabbi Scheinberg said the group chose a menorah as a gift to the Hagees, because “A menorah is the symbol of Israel, and it represents life and hope. We felt that Pastor Hagee had given much light and hope to the people of Israel through selfless devotion, loyalty and love for the Jewish people and the State of Israel. We also chose a menorah because the pastor appreciates the biblical heritage the Christians have from the Jewish Bible and Scriptures, so we wanted something that would be, on the one hand, symbolic of the modern state of Israel and also would have biblical importance.”

Houston community leader Melvin Dow, who spearheaded the Houston fundraising effort with Benjamin Warren and Stanford Alexander, spoke at the dedication ceremony about the biblical and modern significance of the menorah. Lee Wunsch, Jewish Federation of Greater Houston president and CEO, spoke at the ceremony about the financial support that the Hagees have provided to Israel through the years.

“When one looks at the very long list of recipients of gifts from John Hagee Ministries, you can be assured that lives have been saved, centers of learning have been established, hospitals have been built, and the children of Israel have literally been embraced with care, concern and compassion,” said Wunsch.

Other speakers included Riklin and Laura Ehrenberg-Chesler. Riklin spoke about the history of the Night to Honor Israel. Ehrenberg-Chesler spoke about her late father, who was a Holocaust survivor, a friend of Pastor Hagee and a member of the original Federation committee. She told how she believes the Holocaust may not have happened if there had been more Christians like Pastor Hagee.

Yuda Doliner and Israel Fogiel lit the menorah at the dedication ceremony, with anointed oil from Israel. The participants and guests gathered around this beautiful edifice.

“It was an honor to be present with so many leaders of the Houston and San Antonio Jewish communities in recognition of the strong support Pastor Hagee, his wife and his ministries have shown to Israel,” said Howard Feinberg, Jewish Federation of San Antonio interim president and CEO.