

CD-1041 Transcription

Discusses Billy Graham with Q & A. circa 1981.

Marc Tanenbaum:

A meeting like this would normally be perceived from the outside as a meeting of the Council of the Elders of Zion. And part of the signs of the times is the Elders of Zion have become the [Eldresses?] of Zion. Thank God, I'm very happy [for proportion?]. I thought it would be useful to share with you some background about Billy Graham, his relationship to Israel, the Jewish community, and in particular, a mission in which he is about to embark on in the Soviet Union. I don't know how many of you saw a story in *Newsweek* magazine about a week ago, which is fairly accurate, which [01:00] describes something about his forthcoming mission to Moscow. I'll come back to that in a few moments. It is a mission which is potentially of considerable significance to the Jewish community there, and the whole issue of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union, and the relationship of Billy Graham to Israel.

As many of you know, the general images of Dr. Graham in media range from those in the conservative press of that of adulation to that of mimicry, and worse in much of the [02:00] liberal secular press. The very image of a born-again Christian, of an

Evangelical Christian, has led to all kinds of stereotypes. And I think it's important for us, in terms of the very profound concerns that Jews have, in particular at this moment of the life of America and in the international community, with all of the pressures we feel, to separate out those caricatures and stereotypes from some fact in reality as we've experienced them over recent years. I'm not interested in a whitewash; I am not a front-man for Billy Graham. I'm not on his payroll; he couldn't afford me anyway. But my point [03:00] of departure, and I think the point of departure of the American Jewish Committee, to say it as briefly as I can, is that of 'What is good for the Jews?' in this situation.

I began my relationship with Dr. Graham roughly around 1965, when after traveling through the South, I began to experience the enormous transformation that was taking place in the south, the whole sociological transformation of the Evangelical community, from rednecks, as they were perceived, Bible-thumpers, (inaudible), to the people who had become increasingly middle-class, socio-economically had moved into the ministry of the South, had begun to achieve major strides [04:00:00] in advanced education. And it just struck me that the images in which I was raised about Evangelical Christians had almost no relationship to the reality that I had begun to experience in

the South. Beyond that, it began to be clear roughly in the 1960s that the fastest-growing community in America was that of the Evangelical Christian community, who today now number forty to fifty million Christians. And their growth began to take place at a time when liberal Protestantism, as a result of the Civil Rights struggle and other concerns, was declining. Now the Presbyterians lost half their membership, their budget was split in half; the Episcopalians were going through the same kind of devolution. And it became clear to me that somehow we had better begun to understand who these Evangelical Christians were.

It was out of that [in world?] that Jimmy Carter emerged as the first president [05:00] of the United States as a born-again Christian, the first president from the Evangelical community to seek the presidency, the first candidate to seek the presidency in more than a hundred years.

So Dr. Graham invited me to visit with him in his home in [Montfort?], North Carolina, and we spent some three and a half hours together talking about everything. I want to share with you, not for the record -- one of the reasons not for the record is that I'm in the process of writing a book on Billy Graham, the Jews and Israel, with Dr. Graham's permission. And he wants me to hold off for a while until the Middle East situation

settles down out of fear of reprisals against southern Baptists in Jordan and elsewhere. Because, as a result of that relationship with Dr. Graham, since '65-'66, I've gone through some extraordinary experiences with him in relation to Israel, and Soviet Jewry [06:00] anti-Semitism, and conversion experiences, Jews for Jesus, and others. And I want to share this with you as part of the background of a discussion with Dr. Graham -- I'm not sure yet what he wants to get into.

We talked briefly in New York on March 10th, when he got the Templeton Award. But let me tell you this, that after the 1967 War, in fact, during the 1967 War -- that was the first time it happened -- especially in the 1973 War, Graham played a decisive and unreported role in relation to winning support in the White House for Israel. He had an [07:00] intimate friendship with Golda Meir. Golda Meir never came to the United States without calling him or seeing him, and the reason for it is several-fold. In fact, I tell you by way of anecdote, when I visited with him subsequently at his home in 1973, during the 1973 campaign, he took me into his library where we sat down to talk. And we were talking about his theological views about Judaism and the Jewish people. He went to the library and pulled out a black Bible, *Jews from the Bible*, opened it up, and it said, "To my dear friend, Billy," signed Golda. And that friendship grew

out of the fact that when Israel was in need of military aid in 1967, Billy Graham quietly, [08:00] privately, made interventions with the president of the United States at a time when almost no one else was able to reach the president.

During the 1973 War -- and some of you may have read Kissinger's memoir recently in *Time* magazine regarding the debate that took place in the Cabinet after the third and fourth day of the '73 Yom Kippur War -- when a conflict broke out between James Schlesinger and Kissinger as to the provision of supplies to Israel. By the fourth day of the war Israel was virtually without any missiles to counter the Egyptian attack that had begun to successfully take place across the Suez Canal.

Kissinger was playing his [09:00] typical game of (inaudible) politic, Israel should be helped enough to win, but not win big; Egypt should be helped enough to counter Israel, but not to be able to defeat Israel. And for two days there was a stalemate between Kissinger and Schlesinger as to whether or not missiles should be made available to Israel on an emergency airlift basis. And there was no resolution to that conflict and the Israelis began to panic. They were totally unprepared for the war. Golda Meir had tried to reach Nixon and could not get through. Several Jewish leaders, including Max [Fisher?] and others, tried to get to see Nixon, and Nixon refused to see them

for two days -- three days. I got a call on the fourth day from Simcha [10:00] Dinitz at midnight at my home that "Golda Meir is trying to reach Billy Graham and can't get him at his home. Do you know where he is?" So I contacted one of the aides of Billy Graham, who's close to us, who maybe you'll meet today, and I told him the urgency. And I got the telephone number of Billy Graham. I got Simcha Dinitz. And during the night Golda Meir reached Billy Graham and begged him to contact Nixon to tell him how critical it was for Israel to get those missiles within 24 hours or Israel may very well be defeated. That's how massive the onslaught came from Egypt. By that time, Israel had already lost 2,000 soldiers, the equivalent of 150,000 soldiers relative to America's population.

President [11:00] Nixon had left instructions, after he became President, that when Billy Graham calls the White House switchboard, he is to be put through directly to him; if Nixon is not available, he is to have direct access to Henry Kissinger. Billy Graham, after talking with Golda Meir and feeling the urgency of that situation, called Nixon immediately, pleaded with him to resolve the conflict between Kissinger and Schlesinger. And said that God will judge you as to how you respond to Israel in its hour of need. That God forbid if anything should happen to Israel, you will have to bear the

responsibility before the Lord, for failing the Jewish people [12:00] in their hour of need.

Kissinger owns up only to the fact that the conflict was resolved and that Nixon made the decision for the missiles to go. And the next morning, the biggest airlift in the history of American military history was undertaken, larger by four times to that of the Berlin airlift. And planes left airfields out of Virginia around the clock with missiles and other military equipment, which reached Israel within the next 24, 48 hours. And if you talk to the Simcha Dinitz, who was at the center of that whole operation, he will tell you that, literally, Billy Graham was the key to Israel's survival in the '73 War. Israeli officialdom [13:00] that knows about this, [Teddy Kellick?] regards himself as one of the closest friends of Graham -- he invited Graham to come there to spend a year in (inaudible) to write a book on Israel from an Evangelical perspective, and Graham has accepted in principle -- has not worked that out.

After the '67 War, when it became clear that there was so much confusion, especially in the liberal Protestant community -- not a single Protestant leader spoke out in support of Israel's defense of itself in the '67 War when it was surrounded. In fact, a sense of outrage has developed in the Jewish community,

and many rabbis, several of whom -- distinguished rabbis here who can attest to this, in the wake of the silence and worse, that came from liberal Protestant leaders. And I'm not here playing [14:00] a game of conservative Protestants versus liberal Protestants; it's simply a matter of the fact of the situation. When a man like Dr. Henry Pit Van Dusen, who is the former President of Union Theological Seminary, the major Protestant Denominational seminary, literally the week after Israel's striking victory of the '67 War, wrote a letter to the *New York Times* which is one of the great moral obscenities of this generation, in which he likened Israel's victory to that of a Nazi Blitzkrieg. How do you deal with the poor Arab world mercilessly? Saying nothing about the assault of five Arab countries who set out to destroy Israel. And reverberations of Pit Van Dusen's sentiments began to go through the whole liberal Protestant community. We set up a meeting for a group of liberal Protestant leaders shortly thereafter because Pit Van Dusen's line began to become the catchword in the liberal Protestant hierarchy. And we arranged the meeting in which [Rabbi Heschel?] (inaudible) [15:00] spoke, and others.

Billy Graham became so concerned about this wave of reaction among many Christians, especially liberal Christians, who somehow could understand Israel as a victim but could not cope

with the image of Israel as a victim defending itself. And Graham commissioned his people, the Billy Graham Film Association, to do a film called *His Lamb*. He invested a half million dollars in that film. It is one of the most beautiful films about Israel -- if you have not seen it, you should see it. It's a love poem done from an Evangelical perspective with [Cliff Barrows?], one of his aides, walking through all of Israel with a Bible in his hand and relating the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah to the actual land experience as they walk through the countryside.

It was an [16:00] Evangelical film. After I had seen it, I thought it was so beautiful, but the first version of it was in fact an Evangelical film whose purpose was to climax with a Christian appeal for conversion to Christianity. It was done tastefully, but I said to Billy, "I can't sell that. That's not going to go. It's not going to float in my circles, Billy." So I said, "Maybe we need another ending for the general audience, and we need one for our own community." So he produced two endings to *His Lamb*, Evangelical and others. The film, *His Lamb*, continues to be shown in Evangelical churches. On an average Sunday, for example, the First Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, 4,000 people have come to see that film, and have responded to

it with a rousing, standing ovation. That's led to all kinds of activities, groups of tours, etc.

I don't want to go into much greater detail, other than to tell these rather dramatic episodes. I can tell you stories of [17:00] how he helped me get some families out of the Soviet Union, [Rup Alexandrovich?], who was in (inaudible) Prison. A 23-year-old nurse who, literally, was on the verge of dying from arthritis and asthma -- she was in prison for three years; the sin was the KGB caught her purchasing a Bible on the black market. And I brought her mother to see Graham in Chicago on a Sunday, and Graham got on the telephone and reached Kissinger; in three months she was released from prison and was brought here as well.

Graham's taken stands against anti-Semitism in very powerful ways from a religious perspective. He's taken stands against the PLO and terrorism, when we gave him our first inter-religious award in Atlanta three years ago he made a magnificent speech. A lot of people came doubting, skeptical; when he finished his statement and his attitude toward Jews and [18:00] Judaism, speaking of God's (inaudible) of the Jewish people, a covenant in the Bible, and taking a stand again against anti-Semitism and

prejudice, and then against terrorism and the violence of the PLO, he got a standing ovation from all of our leaders there.

I just want to conclude by -- and I hope you now get a chance to listen to the discussion about some of those concerns that you might have. He will be in Moscow on May 9th; he was invited by the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Archbishop Keenan, to take part in a conference on nuclear disarmament and the survival of the human race. Some of you may know, Graham, in recent years, has made that his central, moral issue because he believes what is at stake here is the very survival [19:00] of human life, as indeed, I believe it is a central question of our time. There has been very great pressure against them from the White House and the State Department not to go because there's fear that the Soviets are going to use him for their propaganda purposes.

And the pressure has been formidable, I saw it when I was with him at the UN on March 10th when he got the Templeton Award, when it was announced. And a representative of the State Department came in, of ambassadorial rank, and pleaded with him, in my presence across the table, to change his mind. Well, Graham has decided to go. For him, spiritually, religiously it is the climax, the capstan of his career. It's the only country in the

world he has not preached thus far. And the morning after we finished at a press conference, which I was invited to address as a response to his getting the Templeton Award, he took me aside and said, "I want to get your advice about whether [20:00] you think it'll be helpful or not for me to meet with representatives of the Jewish community in Russia, in Moscow." We had that discussion several times before -- before he went to Hungary and before he went to Poland, Auschwitz -- and in each case, I counseled him to meet with Jewish leaders because he was meeting with all other religious groups. And my sense of the situation was that if he goes to Hungary and meets with Orthodox and Catholics and Baptists and Pentecostals and doesn't meet with Jews, that will be a message to that repressive government that Jews don't count in the international scheme of things. And Graham shared that conviction.

He went, and I arranged for him to meet with the leadership of the Hungarian community. It was an incredibly moving experience. He learned, for the first time, the magnitude of the suffering of Jews in Hungary, and they sat together after they spoke, they held hands, they prayed together, and they all began to cry like babies. And to them it was one of the most moving experiences. The head [21:00] of the seminary wrote to me because the [personal?] Graham's standing, in a sense to risk the success of

his tour by identifying with the Jewish community, which is a minority community. But now he's prepared to do the same thing when he goes to the Soviet Union, and we're going to spend some time together. He has asked me to review with him the situation of Jews there, to give him some background on who to meet with when he gets there, and to arrange for him to meet with appropriate Jewish, religious and dissident representatives while he's there.

So I'm sure that all of that will come out in the discussion today. Believe me, these are representative of the facts of some of the things that are going on. I'm not bringing Billy Graham for the chief rabbi of the American Jewish Community. But I think it is important for us to know, in a world in which -- in the United Nations, [22:00] there is an effort to isolate Israel as a pariah among the nations. In a country where presidents speak about dual loyalty with a deed toward isolating Jews from the mainstream of America (inaudible). We don't play games and trivialize relationships of people who reach out hands of friendship, whatever the motivation, and dismiss that as inconsequential. And I take the intention of Dr. Graham as one of an extraordinary record of friendship, not just in terms of speeches and intention, but demonstration and counted to be a fact of supreme importance to us. And for him to undertake,

during this trip which will get tremendous attention everywhere, to consider wanting to go to the Moscow Synagogue, to consider wanting to meet with [Sheransky]'s mother with the view toward trying to save his life, as being an act of not only friendship, but indeed, of great moral courage.

And it's against that background that I hope we'll [23:00] consider our meeting with Dr. Graham today. I might have gone too long, but I hope he's going to talk about anything that's on your mind before he comes in.

F1:

Because we have so many representatives here, I will ask you to do the same thing when Dr. Graham comes. Would you introduce yourself when you are called upon to (inaudible)? (inaudible) [Ruth Stein?] who is the head of Combined Jewish Philanthropy. (inaudible). Every (inaudible) mentioned, and he said some very wonderful, glowing things about Dr. Graham. And it was clear that his relationship with Israel was not just for some (inaudible), it was genuinely very (inaudible). He did not mention at all any domestic issues, or any relationship within the Evangelical community and the American Jewish community, and I wondered whether you're suggesting that these are not something (inaudible)?

Marc Tanenbaum:

Now, I'm not [24:00] suggesting that. I am concerned about the time that we have together with him. We have exactly an hour. His schedule will cause him to leave here at 4:00 for another meeting. I thought in terms of some of our priority concerns -- the most pressing concerns -- these certainly are foremost among them.

I think on the domestic front, he is prepared -- I'm not sure how he wants to deal with it, but his concern about anti-Semitism is very real. And he's made a number of statements recently, and is prepared to go very far, again, to deal with that issue. I'm not sure there's much profit getting involved with him in any discussion of Reaganomics, and the problems of its implications with the poor and the dispossessed, etc. My sense is that he's a very honest man and he realizes that [25:00] having gotten involved more than he cared to, or should have, with Nixon, who was burned badly. He will tell you, "I will not get involved in that kind of political relationship ever again." And he has, in fact, avoided that kind of political relationship with Ronald Reagan.

Reagan has consulted him on a number of issues, but he's avoided getting into that kind of concrete detailed politics. He is personally -- in terms of another domestic issue, not terribly sympathetic with the Moral Majority and Jerry Falwell. As in Evangelical meetings, as a good friend of Marvin Wilson may attest, at a meeting of the National Religious Broadcasters Association, carefully, with great sensitivity to the kind of fellowship that exists among Evangelical ministries -- been very critical of the Electronic Church and its hustling for money rather than preaching the gospel as an end in itself. [26:00] Usually there's a means to an end, frequently.

But I think the simple question for us, I think, is What do we want to realize in this conversation with him? And I think we ought to be clear about our priorities and not make nonessential or trivial issues central issues where we end up burning away precious time with him. This is the only meeting he is having with Jewish leadership before he goes to Moscow. We may have one meeting with him with a small group on the Soviet Jewry issue, with the National Conference of Soviet Jewry with [Ted Mann?] and others. Therefore, I hope we would use it to maximum advantage. But there are no rules to this game, there are no limits on what one might discuss.

M1:

In the letter that (inaudible) -- in the letter of invitation to this meeting, it was indicated -- I don't know if you saw this letter -- it was indicated the purpose of the meeting is twofold, as you bring the Christian Crusade to New England, [27:00] "Dr. Graham welcomes the opportunity to meet with Jewish Community leaders to clarify what the Crusade is and what it is not." Second point: "In turn, we want to discuss with him some of our anxieties and concerns with the Evangelical movement." Based on your experience, what can you give us by way of background that might be helpful in our discussion with him?

Marc Tanenbaum:

(inaudible) you mean in relation to the Crusade?

M1:

Right. Which were the two items which were mentioned in the letter of invitation, that he will bring them up or if he doesn't, should we? And if we should, in what way and what can we expect?

Marc Tanenbaum:

Well, let's see what he has to say about the Crusade. I don't know what he plans to say. I do know that some of the people

associated with him -- the chairman of the Crusade, Lawson [Svergen], who's a friend of mine -- he's president of Commercial Union; he happens to [28:00] be Evangelical Christian. He was very much concerned that the Crusade not get involved in all kinds of controversy. They are very careful, as one has every right to be, that they not be attacked on right, or out of left field for trying to evangelize Jews, which is not his purpose, as the Jewish community as an entity. If you want to, feel free to ask him about his attitude toward evangelization of Jews, or Jews for Jesus.

In 1973, during the [Key '73?] campaign, he became very upset about the pressure being brought to bear on Jewish kids at colleges and high schools. And when I went to see him, and we talked it through, he issued a statement attacking Jews for Jesus and the Hebrew-Christian Alliance saying that he is opposed to organized efforts and organized bodies to (inaudible). [29:00] But I think -- want to ask him that, how he feels about that today. Incidentally, I think his theology of Israel has grown enormously; he has begun to give thought to that in recent years. And when I was with him in '73, and he pulled out the Golda Meir Bible, he began quoting [something?] from the Bible to show me how he believes that God's covenant with the Jewish people is permanent; it's not for Christians to

substitute for that covenant. We leave to God, at the end of the day, as what the future destiny of Jews is to be. But there's no reason why not to ask that question in relation among other concerns.

M1:

Thank you.

M2:

If we look at Christians, and our experiences in the past on the college campuses has been that even (inaudible) easy to deal with. But (inaudible) one, as a (inaudible).

Marc Tanenbaum:

I think it's an important question to ask --

F2:

Can you hear?

F3:

No.

M3:

[30:00] We're going to get the air conditioner turned down.

F2:

Could you? The question was that Dr. Graham, on the college campuses was very eager to work with the groups that he has worked with had been very difficult --

M2:

Evangelical group on the college campus (inaudible) has targeted their Evangelical group, their missionary efforts (inaudible).

Marc Tanenbaum:

With a Campus Crusade for Christ, Inter-Varsity...

M3:

(inaudible).

Marc Tanenbaum:

Well, let me tell what happened in '73. He was very upset at what he saw as emerging out of the Campus Crusade for Christ at Inter-varsity Youth as anti-Semitism. That is to say when these zealous, young Evangelicals began going after Jewish young people on college campuses and high schools, and kids refused to respond to their call, they [31:00] began responding with naked anti-Semitism, "Stiff-neck Jews," "Hard-hearted," (inaudible).

M3:

(inaudible)

Marc Tanenbaum:

When contacted -- and first of all, he issued a statement. His statement was sent to the Campus Crusade for Christ Inter-Varsity Youth. And after that happened, Bill Bright, who was head of the Campus Crusade for Christ, came to see me, and I laid it out on the table. I said, "We're going to hold you accountable for the pressure that your young zealots bring on Jewish kids." And some of the stories were horrendous; they were horror stories. And the Campus Crusade for Christ kids went into Duke University in the dormitory looking for mezuzahs. And they found a mezuzah, they would literally break into a room or come in under false pretenses -- questionnaire, that kind of thing -- would refuse to leave a room. They would stay until about three o'clock in the morning until they got a decision for Christ from the Jewish kids. The kids would have to pick them up, throw them out bodily, and it developed into a real conflict.

[32:00] Well, that appalled him. He said, "That's opposed to everything I think of as a Baptist, in terms of freedom of conscience and voluntary consent." And he contacted a number of

the missionary groups and told them they've got to discipline their young people. And Bill Bright subsequently called a meeting of his campaign captains and read the riot act to them, in terms of how to relate to Jews. And so that pressure began to subside very substantially, and they well be, that if you have the chapter and verse of something like that happening to raise that. Graham is not bashful in putting that to the people who are running the campaign on university campuses. And I think it is important to raise that if there are those kinds of pressures developing. And now a statement from him, it may well be that he's prepared to issue another statement in relation to the Crusade as he did in Key '73, and that may very well help in creating the atmospherics which will enable you to talk to the local Evangelicals saying, "This is opposed to what Graham is [33:00] about." We may well ask him to do that.

M4:

Where is he speaking in New England?

Marc Tanenbaum:

I don't know. You would know better than I.

F2:

(inaudible).

M5:

All over New England. He will be in Hartford, Manchester, Springfield, Boston, New Haven, and Providence, Rhode Island.

M4:

(inaudible).

M5: I don't know. The Crusade is -- later in April and May and early June. He will be in the Boston area late May and early June.

Marc Tanenbaum:

Do we have a list of the places, and do we have his --

M5:

I do have the list. I do not have it with me.

M4:

Can I have that?

Marc Tanenbaum:

It may be worthwhile if...

F2:

(inaudible) at Boston University over a series of date, I think almost a week every day (inaudible).

F4:

Thank you. Has it ever been the experience in various communities where they had had these (inaudible), that the presence of Dr. Graham and the media hype of the activity [34:00] will energize not only the Evangelicals, but other groups, perhaps, who might be -- or individuals -- we've had some anti-Semitic incidents -- has never been just the presence of the Crusade that would energize these kinds of incidents that we might need to be more vigilant about, or prepare the community.

Marc Tanenbaum:

The anti-Semitic groups, fringe groups?

F4:

Or individual acts of anti-Semitic --

Marc Tanenbaum:

I have not seen that. What I have seen is that his presence and the challenge that he makes to the churches tends to energize

liberal Protestants to become more Evangelical. They begin to feel their inadequacy in terms of reaching their own membership and you'll find there's much more talk about Evangelism among liberal Protestants today than ever in the past because of the success of the Evangelical Christians. I have no doubt that groups like [Liberty Lobby?], if they find a phrase somewhere they can pick, [35:00] or pick up a [news lad?]. But if there are any anti-Semitic episodes that emerge out of this, I have no question that if that's brought to his attention that he'll speak to it, and will speak to it during the course of a sermon. He has done this in the past. He did it in Shea Stadium in New York at, one time when I brought something to his attention, in front of, I don't know, 20,000 people. So he's that open on these kinds of issues and cares that much about this. He wants none of that to be associated with his campaign.

M6:

Can I assume that he has a structure of people surrounding him or work with him in this activity, does he not?

Marc Tanenbaum:

He can tell the Pentagon how to organize, his systems management (inaudible).

(laughter)

M7:

Do the people he's organized under him, are they preaching the same principles that he's preaching?

Marc Tanenbaum:

Oh, yeah. People -- of course, Marvin Wilson knows many of these. I've just got my own [36:00] -- and maybe, Marvin, you'd feel free to comment on that. The people I know who are close to him are all raised in his tradition, and look to him for the word, the tone, the direction; the counselors are trained in his style.

M8:

(inaudible) very well (inaudible).

Marc Tanenbaum:

And the people around him are very good friends of ours, [Cliff Barrows?], T.W. Wilson, Grady Wilson, (inaudible) Houston. Is Leighton up here too?

M9:

No. I said his known his associate (inaudible).

Marc Tanenbaum:

Yeah. Brother-in-law. A beautiful guy, written marvelous things about Jews and Judaism. But we should raise that. If it comes up in the discussion, I think one ought to feel free to put those questions to him. (inaudible).

F5:

Marc, do you feel that Dr. Graham is ready to make a positive [37:00] statement in separating himself from the Moral Majority in his group?

Marc Tanenbaum:

I doubt, for his own internal political reasons, that he is prepared to take head-on Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority. If he had wanted to, he would have done that earlier than now. What he has done is address himself to the issues raised by the Moral Majority, rather than the organization and the personalities. He has attacked, several times, the yoking together of the Evangelical mission with a political party. He said, "A political party that flies under the collars of [Evangelists?] will destroy the Evangelical churches of America." And he's been very forthright about that. He's also been very forthright about a lot of manipulation [38:00] and exploitation

that has gone on. And he says there simply is no Christian politics -- no Evangelical politics -- that the Evangelical groups should support. Also, I think part of his intention is, his strength lies in the fact that he is regarded as Mr. Evangelical Christian in America, and he is determined to keep as broad a base of support among mainstream Evangelicals.

My own sense of the situation -- there are 40 to 50 million Evangelicals in America -- probably at least 30 million of them. The sense I get from talking to people, Southern Baptist Conventions (inaudible), there's 30 million that will have nothing to do with the Moral Majority. Moral majority tends to claim far more than they actually represent, just as they claim far more in terms of their impact on television than the data actually shows. But I doubt whether -- you may want to ask him the question about the issues that are raised, the notion of 'if you don't vote for the Panama Canal, you're a bad Christian.'

[39:00] How does he look at that? That's what Falwell's people were saying at one time. That's what they're saying about congressmen and senators on their hit list.

M7:

Would you dictate on (inaudible); would you say a little bit about the distinction between the Evangelical Christians and the

so-called liberal Christian by way of background for us, in terms of religious theology?

Marc Tanenbaum:

Marvin?

(laughter)

Marc Tanenbaum:

You're a privileged person (inaudible).

M8:

Excuse me? Was Marvin introduced (inaudible) room? Professor Marvin Wilson is a dear friend of our community and of the American Jewish Committee. He is a professor of Bible at Jordan College in Wenham, MA. One of the pioneers, really, from the Evangelical Christian community in talking with Jews about issues of common concern.

Marc Tanenbaum:

He's also co-chairman of our first national conference of Evangelicals and Jews and [40:00] co-editor with me of a book called *Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation*, which sells for \$7.95. (laughter)

M9 :

How much at Barnes and Noble? (laughter)

Marvin Wilson:

Thank you. I owe a lot to Rabbi Tanenbaum in getting me into this business. It tends (inaudible). Just to reply to your question a little bit, Evangelical Christians probably, historically have put more emphasis upon the proclamation, the preaching, the sharing of the so-called Gospel message than liberal Protestants. Liberal Protestants have been probably identified with Jewish people a lot easier because they've been primarily social-action people and good-work oriented. And have tended to minimize theological creed and maximize the social-action. [41:00] I think the conscience of Evangelicalism in recent years has been pricked in terms of its negligence in terms of the social concerns and these issues. And one of the happy things, and I think Marc can vouch for this, the last 10 years has shown a profound shift to a much more this-worldly concern. *Theolam ha-zeh* is indeed as important as the *olam haba*. And I --

Marc Tanenbaum:

Your Evangelical Hebrew is great.

Marvin Wilson:

Translate that, Rabbi. This-worldly concerns are as important as other-worldly concerns. I would say that's one broad difference in terms of emphasis. Graham's interests, for instance, on the nuclear issues and concerns like this is symbolic of this shift which is taking place. [Creedily?], [42:00] Evangelicals have probably stressed more doctrinal fine points than liberals. They have tended to be, at times, anti-intellectual, more [separatistic?] from the mainstream of Protestantism. There are other characteristics, some good, some not so good, but these are just -- they're found in every mainline denomination, by the way. And there's a national organization called the National Association of Evangelicals, to which millions of members of churches, Evangelical churches, find their people associating for various kinds of things. But this is where primarily you'll find them on the spectrum. Conservative in theology, but widespread [confluentently?].

Marc Tanenbaum:

I give the one other distinction that comes critical is that Evangelicals tend to [43:00] take the Bible very seriously, believe in the biblical inherency of the Bible in a way that liberal Protestants do not. It tends to view it far more through

the perspective of historical critical scholarship and, therefore, its claims are less binding. They tend to look for the inner message far more than looking at the word of the text itself.

Marvin Wilson:

Which has a natural built-in support, by the way, for Israel. One of the interesting paradoxes is the strongest supporters of Israel in this country are your Evangelical Christians because when the Bible says something about God's relation to Israel -- we tend to take that seriously. God wasn't stuttering when he said that. And the Jews are back in their land; there are many who see this as a fulfillment of some sort of prophetic teaching in the Jewish providence. And yet there are many who want to stress that Jews have a right to the land, and this is one of the messages I'm seeking to stress in my own community that [44:00] the right to the land also must be established, knowing what is just, what is right, what is humane, what is expedient for people who are survivors of a terrible holocaust and it's these other human concerns that I'm very concerned that we see as our community, than it's more than a biblical issue. It's an issue of humanity and survival.

Marc Tanenbaum:

I'm going to suggest that we take a break now because
(inaudible) ought to be here in about another five minutes or
so. He's been detained. He was supposed to be here at 3:00, he's
gotten tied up at his earlier meeting. And Herman tells me that
they're on their way over. So it might be a good idea to take a
break now, so then they can (inaudible) more intense and
(inaudible) the time he comes into the (inaudible).

END OF AUDIO FILE