

Agreement between The Chief Rabbis of Israel and The Archbishop of Canterbury

The Second Meeting of the Chief Rabbis of Israel and the Archbishop of Canterbury Jerusalem 31st October 2007

The second meeting of the Chief Rabbis of Israel and the Archbishop of Canterbury took place in Jerusalem on 31st October 2007 according to the provisions of the Joint Declaration signed by them on 5th September 2006/12th Elul 5766.

The Most Revd Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar and Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger of Israel met to take further their friendly relationship and the mutual interests of the people of their countries.

They welcomed The Rt Revd Michael Jackson, bishop of Clogher and Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, Chief Rabbi of Haifa, as leaders of their delegations to the Anglican Jewish Commission and the Rt Revd Suhail Dawani as the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem.

"We recall our meeting in Lambeth in September last year and the historic nature of the declaration which we signed together. We reaffirm all that we said in that declaration and have today taken forward our relationship and our work towards greater understanding and mutual respect between our communities.

"Since that meeting there have been further developments in the Holy Land and in the wider region, some positive and some worrying. We are very concerned about the wellbeing of the ever increasing numbers of refugees from Iraq and about the plight of religious minorities, in particular Christian communities in Iraq and elsewhere in the region; we call for the release of hostages and in particular for the release of Ehud Goldwasser, Eldad Regev, and Gilad Shalit. Continuing use of aggressive language by President Ahmedinajad of Iran towards Israel is wholly unacceptable to us. We also note, however, the renewed energy towards a comprehensive peace in the region and the many initiatives, religious and secular, being taken to overcome divisions and to seek reconciliation. In particular in this respect, we commend the work of the many organisations that seek to work together from different perspectives for the common good.

"We are very pleased that the first meeting of the Anglican Jewish Commission of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chief Rabbinate of Israel took place in July in a positive atmosphere. The papers provided for that meeting and the discussions that took place on its theme of the sanctity of human life were constructive and insightful. They revealed a depth of mutual agreement, rooted in our shared scriptural heritage, that human life is a gift from God to be valued from conception to the natural ending of life. Between the beginnings of life and its ending, human life is to be nurtured and enabled to flourish and all violence against other human beings is to be deplored as a defacing of the image of God in humanity. We affirm this understanding and wish to encourage Jews and Anglicans around the world to engage together on this basis.

"We have asked the Anglican Jewish Commission to take forward their work at their next meeting and in particular to consider the themes that have been discussed by us today

"We discussed together some recent developments and initiatives by religious leaders and scholars which aim to strengthen the means by which religious communities can co-operate with each other in the search for a world more attuned to the love of God for creation.

"In particular we welcomed the recent meeting of religious leaders held at the invitation of the St Egidio community when the Archbishop of Canterbury and Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger were able to meet together with His Holiness Pope Benedict and with the leaders of many other religious traditions. We look forward to additional opportunities that further the important work of universal religious solidarity. Such solidarity requires us to insist that each others' places of worship, and those of other religions, be regarded by all as sacrosanct and therefore inviolate.

"We also noted with gratitude and appreciation, the further work of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land as well as the Inter-religious Coordinating Council of Israel, an affiliate of the World Council of Religions for Peace.

In this connection the Chief Rabbis of Israel were particularly pleased to know that the Archbishop of Canterbury has accepted the invitation from Religions for Peace to become a Co-President of its World Council and congratulated him on his work for inter religious peace.. We believe that these are very positive developments which are a clear sign of determination to create structures that can advance principled cooperation and moral solidarity among the Christian, Jewish, Islamic and other religious communities.

"In this connection, we noted the recent letter from Muslim scholars and religious leaders to the Christian Churches. The 'Common Word', though addressed to Christian Churches, also makes clear its respect for Hebrew scripture in citing directly from the Book of Deuteronomy and in acknowledging the inspiration that this provided for their understanding of the Quranic teachings on the unity and love of God and of neighbour. In promoting these values we commit ourselves and encourage all religious leaders to ensure that no materials are disseminated by our communities that work against this vision. We have agreed that in responding to the Common Word, it will be important to consider carefully together how the perspectives of Christians and Jews are properly held together.

"At the end of our meeting we give thanks to God for the sacred gift of life and for stirring up in our hearts the desire to see God's will for good fully expressed in human lives. We restate our concern for all hostages and for the many innocent victims of violence; we pray for peace and for peacemakers; we reaffirm our commitment to each other and our firm intent to continue this dialogue on the basis of mutual respect under God. We look forward keenly to our meeting in Lambeth in 2008.