**You Can’t Ever Say You Haven’t Been Told**

*by* [Donald Zev Uslan](https://visionmag.org/author/donald-zev-uslan/)

In the third season of [The Sopranos](https://www.hbo.com/the-sopranos), an acclaimed series about an American crime family, there is a telling scene between Carmela, the wife of Mafia boss Tony Soprano, and an archetypal Jewish psychiatrist, Dr. Krakower.

Carmela has begun to see Dr. Krakower because of her husband’s repeated infidelity and the struggle with her conscience about his criminal behavior, which includes murder. This scene is a type of psychotherapeutic relationship: straight truth in the face of hypocrisy.

Carmela states: “All I did was make sure he’s got clean clothes in his closet and dinner on his table.” Seeing her rationalize her relationship with Tony Soprano, the psychiatrist accuses her of *enabling* her husband’s behavior and then challenges Carmela’s reality avoidance with ethics and morality:

*Dr. Krakower*: I’m not charging you because I won’t take blood money. You can’t either… *One thing you can never say: that you haven’t been told.*

That scene poignantly illustrates how easy it is to make excuses for our actions, to justify and rationalize while fooling ourselves. Hard truth is difficult to swallow. But sometimes morality and ethics have to trump ideology and pragmatics.

With this thought in mind, let’s take a bold leap of faith from an HBO drama into real time in Israel.

While Christian missionaries have, for centuries, had theological aspirations for the peoples living in the Holy Land, interest intensified in 1948 after the establishment of the modern State of Israel and even more so after [Israel’s military victory in 1967](https://visionmag.org/six-day-war-threatens-western-civilization/).

As the year 2000 dawned, millennialism, messianism and eschatological visions coalesced to fuel missionary zeal. Today’s [evangelical mission](https://visionmag.org/resisting-missionary-threat/) is characterized by a sort of end-times urgency – a race against the clock – to get the job done.

The ideological and pragmatic enticements drawing Israel into an unreserved embrace of [evangelical Christian support](https://visionmag.org/soul-wrestling-among-good-friends/) date back to the mid-1980s. The rise of the pro-Israel evangelical Christian Right as an [imposing political force](https://visionmag.org/glenn-plummer-evangelical-faith-based-pitfalls/) in the United States, coupled with the economic boon it afforded Israel, in the form of tourism and other perks, created what many deemed to be a sort of “Judeo-Christian” match made in heaven.

That evangelical Christianity by its very definition is ensconced in evangelism and perceives “sharing the gospel of Jesus” as a sanctified duty, is something that was lost on many pro-Israel Jewish activists. A triumphalist, conversionist sect with 600 million plus adherents led by those supposing to hold the exclusive truth and who place a particular emphasis on “to the Jew first” was considered but an inconsequential nuisance by many Jewish leaders.

There are social, cultural, political, economic, theological, psychological, as well as other dimensions to Israel’s alliance with evangelicals, which makes the whole matter of open cooperation with missionaries difficult and uncomfortable to discuss or understand. And, for most Israelis secure in their identity and faith, it’s an issue that can easily fall beneath the radar.

Unless one is a member of any of the [vulnerable populations targeted by missionaries](https://visionmag.org/evangelical-behavior-predatory/) (Ethiopian and Russian Jews, disenfranchised ḥaredim, the economically challenged, the sick, lone and lonely soldiers, new olim, Holocaust survivors, recovering addicts, those with mental health challenges and at-risk youth), most Israelis remain oblivious to the existence or extent of the problem.

And if there be but an inkling of awareness or pang of conscience on this issue, today’s Jew will uncharacteristically evade the necessary introspection, critical discussion, debate, and comprehensive analysis in an attempt to be “fair “and not rock the boat.

We may choose instead to focus on the exceptions and the outstanding evangelical Christians who do not fit the profile, or to whom we can point to as “kind”, “generous,” “caring” and free from all toxic agendas. We will bend over backwards in our attempt to try and understand their history, nuances, multiple sects and theologies, and seek commonalities. We will rationalize and justify Evangelicalism and reshape what we believe they believe in order to fit our own self-serving lens. We will honor each other by interrupting and attempting to complete each other’s thoughts, then add our own. All things passionate. Talmudic reasoning with a new twist. Instead of splitting hairs for the purpose of clarity, we have created a tangle of split ends with no way out.

And one of the ironies of the approach used by evangelical missionaries in Israel, aside from the duplicity of their intent and the infiltrating covertness of their actions, is the simplicity and focused purpose of missionizing. It seems as if Jewish fundraisers have adopted the simplistic approach of their evangelical cohorts as they accept unconditional donations via the missionary church collection basket versus contending with the questioning, vetting and challenges involved in traditional Jewish philanthropy.

Evangelical simplicity versus Jewish complexity apparently equals complicity in converting Jews to Christianity.

Counter-missionary advocates and missionary awareness experts are justifiably frustrated by the degree to which evangelical Christianity, with its proxy messianic missionary branches, has successfully [rooted itself in the Jewish state](https://visionmag.org/jewish-agency-gone-missionary/). Evangelical Christians wield significant influence in the Israeli government, from Knesset caucuses to the High Court, thanks to the successful advocacy and maneuverings of Israeli Christian messianic attorneys, and the use of protexia (bureaucratic connections) to circumvent rules and regulations.

Powerful lobbying by fundamentalist Christians in the United States under the guise of the American concept of “freedom of religion” has been extremely effective in weakening legal efforts and measures against proselytizing and missionizing in Israel. Weak enforcement by Israeli ministries and organizations responsible for the oversight of missionaries entering the country under falsified documents and/or the Law of Return contributes to the evangelical missionary foothold in the Jewish state.

Equally frustrating to those interested in exposing the wide-spread involvement of missionaries in Israel is the almost universal resistance by mainstream Jewish American and Israeli English print and online media to publish anything critical on the topic of missionaries due to concerns over of a loss of Christian readership and the feared loss of Christian financial support, advertising and sponsorship.

So, how do we address those Jewish leaders who fiercely support and encourage the involvement of evangelical Christian influence in all Israeli sectors such as education, legislation, the military, immigration, labor, tourism, and communications, to name but a few?

As a mental health professional, I wonder if psychological terms and concepts apply to them and their actions. Should we use “denial,” “avoidance,” “control issues,” “compulsive personality traits,” “rationalization,” “enabling”? Open up the DSM-5 (the mental health professionals “bible” – the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and we can find, based on our own biases, maybe a few dozen terms that could be applied.

Those of you who are Jewish leaders – who serve as spiritual, educational, political and community leaders – do you actually know, hear, see, understand, the level of infiltration and inroads that Christian missionaries have made into Israeli society? Can you willingly justify the harm to individual, families and communities in Israel?

Can you acknowledge that you are being used in order for missionaries to gain credibility and legitimacy among vulnerable Israelis? Do you see this as “benign” activity?

If you accept the documented reality that there are over 300 agencies and organizations in Israel dedicated to converting Israelis to Christianity, can you continue to insist and believe they are not facilitating in harming fellow Jews? How do Jewish leaders “feel” about 30,000 Israelis – double the number since 2016 – coming to a belief in Jesus (“Yeshua”) as their “lord and savior”? Families broken. Communities fractured. And, at this rate, how many more Jews converted to Christianity in our homeland do we have to sacrifice before it becomes “intolerable” and then impossible to deal with?

And what if Jewish leaders were to take the money, take the support, appreciate the advocacy, embrace the international political benefits, but insist on written and observable red lines, clear demarcations, with definitive demonstratable behavioral changes, with the consequence of “No Missionizing or our relationship is severed. Period.” And stand by it.

If conversion of Jews by Christian missionaries were prohibited in Israel, do you truly believe that Christian political and financial support of Israel would cease? If so, doesn’t that make you doubt their “love” of the Jewish people and the Holy Land? If not, what is there to be afraid of in establishing red lines prohibiting missionizing?

Or, perhaps, another solution: is it time for Israel to forgo the [price we pay for American support](https://visionmag.org/foreign-aid-neo-colonialism-independence/) if it requires the selling of our Jewish souls to evangelical Christian missionaries? Perhaps we need to seek out other nations for support. Perhaps some of our new international or regional relations may offer a pathway. Perhaps we need to try more readily to “go it alone.”

Jewish Leaders: Stop *enabling*. You have been informed. There are creative, pragmatic solutions.  You can, if you choose, “shoot the messenger” by bullying or obfuscating, but the ethical and moral message remains: You are sacrificing Jewish lives and our Jewish heritage. You can choose to prevent evangelical Christian financial and political support from becoming “blood money.”

“One thing you can never say: that you’ve never been told**.”**

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