

# Jews, evangelicals search for ways to discuss Israel

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WASHINGTON (RNS) American Jews and evangelicals need a formal mechanism to discuss their differences and similarities on support for Israel, leaders from both sides said Thursday (April 28) at the American Jewish Committee's Global Forum 2011.

Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, executive vice president of the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly, spoke alongside Gary Bauer, president of American Values and a board member of Christians United for Israel, about Jewish groups' concerns over evangelical support for Israel.

Much of the concern, Schonfeld said, has centered on theological beliefs -- that "the current state of Israel is part of the (biblical) end of days scenario," according to Christians, while Jews "value life in its present tense," she said.

In addition, while Jewish groups value evangelicals' strong support for Israeli security, the two sides tend to differ on such issues as rights for women and gays, and religion in the public sphere.

The differences also extend to how to support Israel. While Schonfeld said supporting Israel also means questioning its policies, Bauer called it "irresponsible to lecture Israelis on what they should or shouldn't do."

Nonetheless, Schonfeld said the "organized Jewish community does not really have a structure, a way to deepen these relationships." There is, she said, "a need for more."

Bauer agreed. "The need for continuing dialogue is incredibly important," he said.