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Hundreds of Christians Joined Rabbi Riskin to Celebrate Sukkot

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EFRAT, Israel, Oct. 22, 2014 /[Christian Newswire](#)/ -- Last week, hundreds of Christians from around the world celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles in Israel with Rabbi Shlomo Riskin that



included a 'praise service' of the Hallel – Psalms 113-118. The event was unprecedented, the first time an Orthodox Jewish Rabbi invited the Christian community to such a gathering. Rabbi Riskin is the Chief Rabbi of Efrat, serves as Israel's Ambassador for Jewish-Christian Relations and is Founder of the Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation (CJCUC). Long time veteran in Jewish-Christian relations, Cheryl Hauer of Bridges for Peace said, "I waited 25 years for this moment and this was the first time where we (Christians) felt completely accepted by the Jewish community in the Land."

The service took place at CJCUC's headquarters in Efrat in partnership with other Jewish personalities who have extensive relationships with the Christian community such as Rabbi Tuly Weisz of Israel365, Sondra Baras the head of Christian Friends of Israel Communities, Yitzchak Sokoloff of Keshet Educational Tours and Jonathan Feldstein of Heart to Heart. "We enabled Christians to experience a central component of Jewish praise in a way that appreciates the depth of our connection to God, bringing us that much closer to the realization of the visions of our prophets," Baras said. Feldstein added, "It was an honor to participate in an unprecedented program that brought together members of both the Jewish and Christian community in praising the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in His covenanted Land."

Thousands of Christians come to Israel each year to fulfill Zechariah 14:16, where the prophesy states that the nations of the world will celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. However, their celebrations are usually in parallel to, not part of, the Jewish community's celebrations. According to David Nekrutman, the Executive Director for CJCUC, "there are no venues where Christians can come to an authentic Jewish expression of the holiday in a comfortable environment where they can feel as

participants in a service and not as spectators." Jim McKenzie of Christian Friends of Israel added that "it took enormous amount of courage on Rabbi Riskin's part and the rest of the Jewish community represented at the event to trust the relationship to the extent that a praise service of the psalms could be conducted during a sacred season on the Jewish calendar with the Christian community. We're so thankful to participate in such an inspiring and historic event."

Participants sang traditional Hallel melodies in Hebrew, and Jewish representatives gave insights into Psalms 113-118 while Christian representatives recited the psalms in English. Gary Bachman, the head of Zion's Gate International and a partner in the event, said, "One of the most heartfelt moments during the service was when Rabbi Riskin took some of the pastors and began to dance. You could feel the room resound with joy in seeing all nationalities and ethnicities coming together as one." Inspired by the event, Sokoloff commented that, "Keshet Educational Tours is going to work with CJCUC in putting together a 'Nations of the World' tour for May 2015 to have Christians celebrate Israel's Independence Day with the Jewish people in Jerusalem as well as visit Israeli companies and people that are making a global impact to better humanity."

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