YAEL ECKSTEIN

FOREWORD BY DR. PAT ROBERTSON
AND GORDON ROBERTSON

GENERATION - TO -GENERATION

Passing on a Legacy of Faith to Our Children



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GENERATION TO GENERATION

Passing on a Legacy of Faith to Our Children



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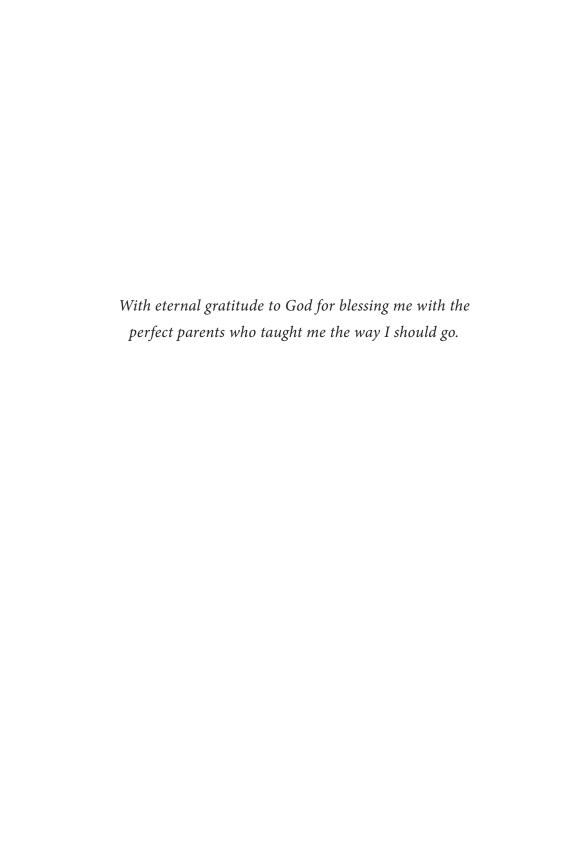
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FOREWORD

When a young Orthodox Rabbi began his visionary work in 1983 building bridges of understanding between Christians and Jews, it was Dr. Pat Robertson, president of CBN and Regent University, who was one of the first Christian leaders to step forward to embrace Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein's work. Following Rabbi Eckstein's untimely death in 2019, his daughter Yael Eckstein stood at the helm of the organization the Rabbi founded, the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, as its new president. And it was Dr. Robertson's son, Gordon Robertson, who stepped forward to offer his support. Father and son. Father and daughter. Each represents a link in the chain of faith that stretches from generation to generation, and extends that legacy of faith beyond the boundaries of time and space for generations to come.



I was privileged to know and to support an extraordinary man, Yechiel Eckstein. Yechiel was an Orthodox Rabbi who realized that building bridges between Christians and Jews was a worthy center for a lifetime work.

After the horrors of the Holocaust and the refusal of some Christian groups to intervene, there arose in the Jewish community a profound aversion to Christians. Yet in the modern-day evangelical church, there is a profound love of Israel and Jewish causes.

Yechiel Eckstein saw beyond the prejudices of his day to build a fellowship which has brought tens of millions of dollars in relief to beleaguered Holocaust survivors and needy Jews in Israel and around the world that springs forth from the love which evangelical Christians have for Israel.

The work of the *International Fellowship of Christians and Jews* is indeed profound, and I am delighted that Yechiel's daughter, Yael, is carrying on the work of her father. I know that good things are still to come in his memory and as his legacy.

Pat Robertson Founder/Chairman The Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc.



Have you ever wondered why God chose Abraham? Genesis 18:19 gives us the answer: "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him" (NKJV). The "keeping of the way of the LORD" is not only the secret to Abraham being chosen; it is also the secret to the survival of Judaism. Even without dwelling in their homeland for more than 2,000 years, the Jewish people have survived. No other nation on earth has retained their culture and their faith for 4,000 years.

God is the God of generations, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and this pattern of generations has been repeated since Abraham to the present day. The faith of our fathers is a legacy that requires each generation to keep the way of the Lord. Within the Jewish family, each generation plays a role in observance in the home, from the youngest asking questions at the *seder*, to the mother lighting candles, to the grandfather and father giving the blessing over the children on the Sabbath. Judaism is not just observed in the synagogue, it is primarily observed in the home, and each member of the family is a participant.

In today's world, we live in a culture that is increasingly intolerant of belief, particularly belief in a Judeo-Christian worldview, and in commandments to obey. For years, I have longed for a book, a manual, that could be used by Christian families to transmit a living faith through the generations even while living in a hostile culture. Yael Eckstein has given us that book.

May you study it, may you adopt it, and more importantly, may you do what is written here. If you do, you will find that as we keep our faith, our faith will in turn keep us.

Gordon Robertson President and CEO The Christian Broadcasting Network, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts; let them proclaim your power. — PSALM 145:4, NLT On February 6, 2019, my life changed forever with one phone call. I had just returned from a family vacation when I received the news that my Abba, my father, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, had unexpectedly and tragically passed away at age 67. In the blink of an eye, I had lost my father, my mentor, and my role model.

International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, I had decided to follow in his footsteps, dedicating my life, as he had, to bringing Christians and Jews together and helping Jewish people in need in Israel and around the world. Just months earlier, *The Fellowship*'s Board of Directors had named me President-elect to take up my father's mantle once he retired in three years. I had been blessed to

work alongside my father since 2005, taking in his vision, his direction, and more recently, taking on more of the day-to-day duties of running the organization. However, the plan had always been for him to be by my side, guiding me through the transition. Now, bereft and devastated, I faced an unknown future on unfamiliar terrain.

Yet, in those difficult days following my father's passing, what became increasingly clear to me was that he had been preparing me for this very moment my entire life. Not only had he begun training me for running the largest nonprofit humanitarian organization in Israel, more importantly, he had been instilling in me from my childhood the foundational values I would need to navigate this world and make it a better place. My father had left me a legacy of faith.

As renowned Christian preacher Billy Graham said, "The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith." In Judaism, we refer to this as *l'dor v'dor*, which literally means "from generation to generation." We pass down our faith to the next generation not just through formal religious training, but through the holy observances, the rituals, and the traditions that happen within the life of the family. I learned the importance of setting priorities and putting God first through the weekly observance of *Shabbat*. I learned the value of asking questions and seeking wisdom as my family gathered around the *seder* table for Passover. Each holiday that we observed throughout

the year, and each tradition that we followed — from the *tzedakah* (charity) box we kept in the kitchen to the reciting of blessings before and after every meal — were opportunities for my mother and father to reinforce the fundamental values of hope, gratitude, generosity, courage, faith, and forgiveness. It is these same values that my husband and I are now teaching and passing on to our four children. I know this brought great pride to my father as he watched his grandchildren being raised with those same values and with so much love for God.

When he founded *The Fellowship* in 1983, my father believed that it was this common ground, this commitment to faith and instilling these fundamental values in our children, that both Christians and Jews shared. He dedicated his life to building bridges of understanding between Christians and Jews. As more and more Christians began exploring the Jewish roots of their faith, he shared with them how the apostle Paul in Romans 11 taught that Christians have been grafted onto the rich olive tree of Israel. It is with his vision in mind that I write this book and invite you to take this journey of faith with me.

In the pages of this book, we will explore holy observances of the Jewish year and the key value it reinforces, through the teachings I learned at my father's feet, and how my husband and I now incorporate those teachings into our own family. In addition, after each chapter, we have provided a section just for you with information on how the observance is mentioned in the Christian Bible. along with questions and Bible stories to discuss with your family, and a selection of Bible verses to memorize that emphasize a key value. My prayer is that you, too, will be inspired and encouraged as you pass on your faith and train your children for lives of godliness.

Finally, this book is a tribute to my father, in deep gratitude for his love and for his legacy. Shortly before he passed away, my father gave me his blessing in preparation for the day I would assume the duties as president. He said to me then, "This is the prayer I've recited over you every Friday night on *Shabbat* since you were born: May the Lord bless you like our mothers Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah. May the Lord bless you and watch over you. May He let His light shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May He lift up His countenance unto you and grant you *shalom*, peace. This is my blessing to you, that your life with your family, with your children, and your calling be filled with love and meaning."

These are the words that I have carried in my heart since that darkest day, and which have enabled me to carry on my father's legacy and pass it on to my own children. Thank you, *Abba*. I love you always.

Yael Eckstein

Fellowship President & CEO

Yael Eckstein



SHABBAT

TEACHING OUR CHILDREN PRIORITIES

"It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." — EXODUS 31:17

"One can say without exaggeration that more than Israel has kept the Sabbath, the Sabbath has kept and preserved Israel."

— Ahad Ha'am, (1856–1927), Hebrew essayist and founder of cultural Zionism

UR CHILDREN TODAY ARE GROWING UP IN THE MOST TECHnologically advanced generation the world has ever witnessed. Unlike previous generations, who also enjoyed more technology than their parents did, our world is changing much faster, and the effects are far greater than before. Unsurprisingly, this has had a profound impact on every aspect of our lives, including the most important ones: family, friends, community, and our connection to God.

On the positive side, technology has given us the ability to "stay connected" and communicate more often and more easily. We can video chat, send messages, share photos, and speak to one another from just about anywhere in the world with the simple press of a button. We can also receive and share ideas, inspiration, and knowledge via the internet that undoubtedly help us live better lives.

However, there also is an adverse side to technology. Children and adults are spending more time on electronic devices and less time together with family and friends. Moreover, as society has advanced technologically, life has become increasingly busy. Parents work longer hours, and children have busier after-school schedules than just a decade ago. Statistics show that the average American family spends only 35–50 minutes talking to each other on weekdays and less than three hours in meaningful engagement on weekends. Family meals are far less common than they used to be, although studies have proven that eating together as a family several days a week improves a child's health, grades, and emotional stability. Day after day, week after week, year after year, our lives rush by, but we still don't have significant time for what matters most.

In the Ten Commandments, the Fourth Commandment, sacred to both the Jewish and Christian faiths, directs us to observe a day of rest, the Sabbath. Jews observe the Sabbath from Friday at sundown until Saturday at sundown, while Christians observe it on Sunday. The Hebrew word for Sabbath is *Shabbat*, and while it is commonly translated as "rest," a more accurate translation is "stop." The Scriptures say, "For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is a day of (חשש, Shabbat) sabbath rest, holy to the LORD ... for in six days the

LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day (שבת, Shabbat) he rested and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:15–17).

We are directed to work for six days and then stop working on the seventh, just as God created the world in six days and then stopped creating on the seventh. *Shabbat* beckons us to pause, reflect, refresh, and redirect our lives in a way that is congruent with our values. The Hebrew word *Shabbat* is also closely related to the word *shav*, which means "return." The Sabbath is a day to return to our priorities.

The Sabbath reminds us that while we must work in life, life must never become about work.

In summer 2010, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was interviewed on Larry King Live. Larry King said to him, "You live in the center of a hostile world. Do you ever get to really relax?" Netanyahu answered, "Yes, and I'll tell you when. Every Saturday we have a day off (*Shabbat*). I take an hour and a half, and I read from the Bible with my younger boy. I relax then and I draw a lot of spiritual strength."

Shabbat has always been a source of strength and a conduit for clarity among the Jewish people. Beginning the Sabbath by lighting the Shabbat candles reflects this belief. The Jewish sages taught that gazing at these flames repairs our vision. In other words, all

week long, we can lose perspective. Our vision can become distorted regarding our value and goals. However, the light of *Shabbat* reminds us of what really matters and invites us to focus exclusively on what is most important to us.



I grew up in a very loving family. We enjoyed an abundance of love, but like many families today, we were very busy. My father woke up at 5 a.m. for prayer and Bible study, and then left for work so that he could be at the office by 7 a.m. My mother started her day a bit later, but once she got us off to school, she went to work as well. My sisters and I had long days at a school that taught both secular subjects and Jewish studies. In addition, my parents dedicated their time and talents to volunteering in our community. My sisters and I participated in Jewish youth groups and after-school activities. Our lives were blessedly wonderful — and hectic. In a sea of busyness, *Shabbat* was — and is — the anchor of my life.

No matter how busy our weeks were or how much my father had traveled — no matter what — he made it a priority that on *Shabbat* we were all together as a family. My mother cooked our favorite foods, baked *challah* (the traditional Sabbath bread), and cleaned our home from top to bottom. As my sisters and I grew older, we loved to participate as well, getting many of our first cooking (and cleaning!) lessons as we helped prepare for the holy day

of rest. My father often played music to set the mood — traditional Jewish songs related to the Sabbath. As sundown drew closer, the tempo in the house quickened as we finished our final preparations.

Then, just before sunset, everything stopped and quiet set in. The music was turned off, the cooking was done, the house was ready. I stood with my mother as she lit the *Shabbat* candles and recited the traditional blessing welcoming the Sabbath. We kissed each other and wished each other *Shabbat shalom*, a Sabbath of peace. My father left for synagogue, and I often went with him. We joined our community in soulful singing and worship. Friday night *Shabbat* prayers begin: "Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song" (Psalm 95:1–2). Shabbat gave me time each week to reflect on God's glory and His blessings.

I feel the need for a Sabbath day more than I ever did before.

After services, we returned home to a beautifully set table and a delicious meal. Unlike during the week, no one rushed anywhere. We talked about our week, laughed, sang, and discussed inspiring ideas from the *Torah*. I used to joke that our *Shabbat* meals were like holy therapy sessions, but that is truly what it felt like. *Shabbat* gave us permission to let go of our worries and fill our souls with

godliness. Around the *Shabbat* table, we were unbound by the constraints of weekdays and had limitless time to focus on God and each other. Jewish sages taught that the Sabbath is "a taste of the world to come." Indeed, for us, it was — and is — a little taste of paradise.



Of the many contributions Judaism has made to humanity, *Shabbat* is perhaps the most important. Devoting one day a week for rest and contemplation is one of the greatest gifts that Judaism has brought to the world.

While the Sabbath has been universally acclaimed, it also, at times, has been grossly misunderstood. It is commonly believed that *Shabbat* is observed in order to replenish our physical strength and enable us to work more energetically and productively during the coming week. However, in Judaism, the exact opposite is true. While many people rest on the weekend in preparation for the workweek ahead, Judaism implores us to work during the week *in order to rest on Shabbat*. In the Jewish faith, the Sabbath is the endpoint, the goal, the culmination of the week.

This is why there are no Hebrew names for the first six days of the week. Instead, they are known by the number of days remaining until *Shabbat*. Sunday is called *yom rishon beshabbat*, or "the first day toward *Shabbat*," Monday is *yom shainee beshabbat*, or "the second day toward *Shabbat*," and so on. Every day is a countdown

to the one day that matters most. Only the seventh day, the Sabbath, has a name: *Shabbat*, stop, rest.

The Sabbath reminds us that while we must work in life, life must never become about work. It serves as a weekly reminder that life is about connecting with God, our families, friends, communities, and ultimately, about making the world a better place. Moreover, the Sabbath recalls that God is the Creator and Master over the world, keeping our human role in proper perspective. It is, as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once called it, "an island in time," where we can collectively recalibrate our focus on what really matters.

For one day in seven, we live on this "island in time," where time itself is suspended and we cease to be enslaved by it. The Sabbath is a day of spiritual connection in the context of physical rest. It's a day to recognize God as the Master of the universe and to study His Word. We don't refrain from working just so that we can have a short break before we go back to the grind the next day; we rest from activity so that we can exercise our soul.

In the words of Heschel, the purpose of *Shabbat* is, "To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence of external obligations, a day on which we stop worshiping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow men and the forces of nature ..."

Heschel concludes, "Is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for man's progress than the Sabbath?"

In this day and age, with the constant barrage of information and motion, the *Shabbat* experience is more important than ever. In our fast-paced society, where it's easy to lose oneself in the hustle and bustle of it all, *Shabbat* is essential for slowing down, finding one's self, and hearing the still small voice of God. On *Shabbat*, we are able to press the pause button on the busy schedule of life and take time to focus on what really matters. No one checks email, answers a phone, or gets in a car to go anywhere. We are simply present — with each other and with God.

Perhaps there is no generation more in need of *Shabbat* than our own.



For me, *Shabbat* is a welcome respite from my hectic schedule in my many roles as a mother, wife, and president and CEO of a major nonprofit organization. I thank God that *Shabbat* arrives every seventh day. It is usually around then that our family needs a break and a reminder that life is not about being busy. As a mother, I feel the need for a Sabbath day more than I ever did before. It is the one day a week that we "unplug," so that we can connect with each other.

In our home, we begin preparing for *Shabbat* on Thursday night. Everything that we do is a physical reminder of what is spiritually

important to us as a family. My children love making the special *Shabbat* bread, *challah*, with me, and I embrace the change of pace as we wind down together. Just as my father did, we play *Shabbat*-themed music which helps us transition from feeling stressed to feeling blessed. As the heavenly smell of freshly baked *challah* fills our home, we anticipate the holy day of *Shabbat*.

By the time Friday evening arrives, our *Shabbat* table is beautifully set, my children are dressed in their nicest clothing, and the *Shabbat* candlesticks are polished and shiny. Little details, like a special tablecloth, flowers on the table, and favorite foods on the menu reinforce the message that *Shabbat* is the most special day of the week. My children understand that the things that we do on *Shabbat* — like making time for God, family, and friends — are clearly the priorities in our lives.

As the sun sets on Friday, my daughters join me as we light the Sabbath candles to usher in this sacred time. Traditionally, we light a candle for every member of our family. Jewish tradition teaches that candle-lighting time is an ideal time for prayer, and so the first thing my children see me do as the Sabbath enters is pray for them. We wrap our arms around each other as we sing and pray.

My husband usually arrives home from synagogue with a few guests. We enjoy having guests at our *Shabbat* table, so my children learn that welcoming people into our home and sharing a meal with them is another family priority. Sometimes, we have friends or family over, but often, we'll host people that we barely know, such as a

lonely widow, a lone soldier, or a new immigrant to Israel. During the week, we have so much to do that we often overlook these very people who are in need all around us. We don't have time for them. But on *Shabbat*, we have all the time in the world, and we eagerly turn our attention to God and all His children.

Before we sit down to eat our delicious meal, we bless our children. It is Jewish tradition to bestow the priestly blessing onto our children on *Shabbat*. We lay our hands over each child's head, starting with the oldest, and bless them. In this way, each child feels noticed, cared for, and loved. Next, like most Jewish families, we sing the words of Proverbs 31 in praise of the woman of the home. It's a teachable moment for our children when we take the time to acknowledge and appreciate the hard work that goes into maintaining a home. Finally we bless the *Shabbat* over a cup of wine and begin the meal with *challah*.

These Friday night dinners are our time to ask each child about his or her week. We celebrate the highlights and sympathize with the challenges. It's a time to discuss the portion from the *Torah* that is read that week, and what they have learned in school from the Scriptures. In between courses, we sing Sabbath songs, some of which are hundreds of years old. There are no time limits to our *Shabbat* meals. No one is rushing through the meal to get to another activity or to watch a TV program. We are all fully present with those at our table.

On Saturday, we join our community in the synagogue for prayers. Not only does this teach our children that prayer is a top priority, but also that being part of a faith community is important as well. After services, there is often a light meal served in order to foster fellowship within the community.

As the day unfolds, we enjoy the second *Shabbat* meal together with joy, love, and holiness, just as we did on Friday night. If our children want to get together with their friends after the meal, they have to walk to their houses or make plans before *Shabbat* — talking on the phone or over social media is not an option. Neither is watching a movie or playing video games. My children are most creative with their friends on Saturday afternoons when they come up with endless ways to entertain themselves. Sometimes they play imaginary games, other times they play board games, and the older kids sit and talk. It is a slow-paced, people-focused, and Godhonoring time.

I do not know what kind of world my children will live in when they are adults. Maybe it will be even more saturated with the latest technological distractions and even faster-paced. However, what I do know is that no matter what life has in store for them, my children will always have *Shabbat*. They will always have that refuge, that "island of time," to rest, to stop, to recalibrate and refocus on what is truly important so that they can live meaningful, purposeful, godly lives.

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SABBATH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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On numerous occasions in the New Testament, we find Jesus at odds with the religious leaders of the time over the keeping — or breaking — of the Sabbath rest. And when he rebuked them, saying "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27), Jesus was echoing the intent of the Sabbath as a day of rest, as stated in the Ten Commandments and elsewhere (See Deuteronomy 5:14; Isaiah 58:13-14). In fact, we read throughout the New Testament of Jesus observing the Sabbath by going to synagogue "as was his custom" and teaching (Luke 4:16). Certainly, Paul and his followers observed the Sabbath as well (Acts 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). The author of Hebrews wrote, "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his" (Hebrews 4:9-10).

FAMILY TIME — TEACHING OUR CHILDREN TO SET PRIORITIES

- 1. Make a list of the top three things that are most important to each family member. Share what is on your list with each other. How does knowing God and obeying Him fit into your priorities?
- 2. Read the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38–42 together. What did each sister consider the most important thing to do in serving Jesus? What did Jesus say was most important? How can we demonstrate that God is most important to us?
- 3. Dr. Jim Burns, Ph.D., a Christian author and renowned youth and family expert, wrote, "The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities." What does that look like for your family? Spend time to identify your family's priorities and then work to schedule them into your week.

For Parents

Yael wrote, "My children will always have *Shabbat*. They will always have that refuge, that 'island of time,' to rest, to stop, to recalibrate and refocus on what is truly important so that they can live meaningful, purposeful, godly lives." How can you help your children refocus each week on what is meaningful and purposeful?

MEMORY VERSES

Select one of the verses below for you and your family to memorize and use as a guide on setting priorities.

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Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. — DEUTERONOMY 6:5
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"Be still, and know that I am God." — PSALM 46:10

Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. — ISAIAH 55:6

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." — MATTHEW 6:33

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will. — ROMANS 12:2

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Yael Eckstein is President and CEO of the *International Fellowship* of *Christians and Jews*, the largest charitable organization in Israel and the largest Christian-supported humanitarian organization helping Israel and the Jewish people. *The Fellowship* raises more than \$127 million annually, helping 1.5 million Jews in need in Israel and around the world.

Yael leads all ministry programs and serves as the international envoy and on-air advocate, giving her the rare distinction of being a woman leading one of the world's largest religious charities. She recently was named by a leading Jewish publication as one of the "top 100 individuals who have positively influenced Jewish life" for her work as "the world's leading Jewish interfaith activist."

Prior to her present duties, Yael served as Global Executive Vice President, Senior Vice President, and Director of Program Development and Ministry Outreach. Yael was trained for leadership for over 16 years by her father, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, who founded *The Fellowship* in 1983 by reaching out to Christians and building bridges of trust and mutual effort based on their shared love of the Bible and support for Israel and the Jewish people.

Yael's writings have appeared in a variety of respected publications, including *The Jerusalem Post, Fox News, The Christian Post,* and *The Times of Israel.* She is the author of two books: *Holy Land Reflections: A Collection of Inspirational Insights from Israel,* and *Spiritual Cooking with Yael.* In addition, her insights into life in Israel, the Jewish faith, and Jewish-Christian relations can be heard on *The Fellowship*'s radio program *Holy Land Moments,* which airs five times a week on nearly 1,000 stations in the U.S., Canada, and beyond.

Born in Chicago and now a proud citizen of Israel, Yael and her husband, Amichai, are the proud parents of Meyora, Liam, Sapir, and Shimmy, to whom they are imparting the legacy of faith. "The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grand-children is not money or other material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith." — Billy Graham

In Hebrew, the expression for this is *l'dor v'dor*, which literally means "from generation to generation." In Judaism, faith is passed down from one generation to the next primarily through the holy observances, rituals, and traditions that happen within the life of the family.

Through the weekly observance of the Sabbath, Jewish children learn the importance of setting priorities and putting God first. As the family gathers around the *seder* table for Passover, children learn the value of asking questions and seeking wisdom.

Each holiday observed, and each tradition followed are opportunities to reinforce the fundamental values of faith. *Generation to Generation* unlocks these holy observances and traditions and reveals the key values they reinforce.

Each chapter also includes a special bonus section containing:

- Insight on how the observance is mentioned in the Christian Bible
- Questions and Bible stories to discuss with your family
- Bible verses to memorize that reinforce key values

These are the values and rituals that Yael Eckstein learned from her father, that she and her husband are now passing on to their four children, and that will allow you to pass on a strong and living faith to *your* children and grandchildren.



