

# Israelis reverse stand on Robertson: Response to Robertson's apology

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Israel ended its brief suspension of relations with Pat Robertson after the controversial religious broadcaster apologized for suggesting that Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon's stroke was divine retribution for Israel's withdrawing from the Gaza Strip.

Robertson has been heading an evangelical group planning to raise \$50 million for a Christian park by the Sea of Galilee on land provided by the Israeli government. Israel said it would not deal with Robertson after he made the remarks—widely assailed by U.S. evangelical leaders—about Sharon on his *700 Club* program.

The broadcaster later sent a letter to Sharon's son Omri apologizing for the comments, which he called "insensitive." After hearing of Robertson's apology, Israeli's tourism ministry reversed itself.

"In light of the apology and his expression of sorrow over Sharon's health, we will reconsider our decision," said tourism ministry spokesman Ido Hartuv. The Christian park is expected to bring about 1 million pilgrims to the Holy Land and inject \$1.5 billion into the local economy. -*Ecumenical News International*