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# Love Family

The **Love Family**, or the **Church of Jesus Christ at Armageddon**, was a U.S. communal religious movement led by Paul Erdmann, who renamed himself Love Israel. The Love Family began in 1968 as one small communal household on Queen Anne Hill, Seattle, and within the first ten years, it expanded to a network of communal homes and businesses. As more people arrived and settled in the surrounding neighborhood, Erdman, as the leader, continued to inherit land and homes (primarily from those who joined) in other, more rural areas of Washington State, Alaska, and Hawaii. Most of the property is no longer under the control of Erdman, having been sold or returned to the original owners via litigation.

Sources differ on the Love Family's duration; some claim that after a fractious conflict in 1984, the community was reduced to a small fraction residing in suburban Bothell, Washington, while according to *The Seattle Times* and an article written by Serious Israel, the Love Family continued living on their 300-acre (1.2 km<sup>2</sup>) property in Arlington, Washington. The Love Family flourished on that acreage from 1984 until 2004, when, according to the *Seattle Times*, some families moved to other, smaller properties.<sup>[1]</sup> The Arlington commune supported both a local organic restaurant and an annual festival open to the public called the Garlic Festival, which drew healthy crowds to the property.

## Love Family



Members of the Love Family perform at the 65th Anniversary Celebration of Pike Place Market, 1972. From left to right, Strength Israel, Zeal Israel, Courage Israel, Reality Israel, Integrity Israel, and Encouragement Israel.

Founder
Paul Erdman aka Love Israel
Regions with significant populations
United States
Religions
Christianity

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## Spiritual foundations

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"Love Israel" is a play on one of the fundamental affirmations of the group; "Love is real". Equally important to the remaining members are three other commonly used affirmations: "We are one", "Love is the answer", and "Now is the time". These statements reflect three of the most widely experienced phrases of the 1960s and were the foundation stones of the earlier Love Family culture, even after the bulk of the group had moved on. These three 'fundamental belief' statements were often used to stave deeper curiosity and invoke a deeper discussion into the role of humanity on this earth. Remaining family members still maintain that they were called together to help each other cultivate love, oneness and the presence of God in everyday family life. Very little is spoken about the continuing belief that Love Israel is a leader directed through his vision from God. They also believe that their gathering has Biblical roots and that their purpose is to help fulfill directed prophecies to benefit man and the promises of Jesus.

The current members still claim to view themselves as both the spiritual tribe of Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ at Armageddon, where Armageddon means the time and place of the gathering of God's family. A few family members continue to be renamed (and newborns named) to remind all that each person's character is gifted with a predominant attribute such as Charity, Honor, Honesty or Contentment, that may already be who they are or part of where they need to be.

## History

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The pioneers of the family came together gathered by vision and aggressive recruiting in Seattle's hippie community. Erdman was a salesman with a vision; charismatic and well spoken. Members came to hold him as better than themselves over time, working hard to make sure there was as seamless a hierarchy as possible. The small remaining core of Erdman's community continues to this day.

In 1984, it was reported that membership dwindled from 500 to 40 as the group was forced to give back assets and money to disenchanted members. Notably, the Love Family returned to former member Daniel Gruener aka Richness Love \$1.6 million and 14 Seattle properties.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Current status

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The Love Family evolved from being a highly concentrated communal society with a shared economy, to what some non-members call a cult with their own laws and ways. The greater community in time became a social network of autonomous households that interact through a shared culture that they have continued to create together, without the robes and peer-enforced order. Presently, those that continue to claim membership in what remains of the Family are concentrated in homes and lots on the shore of the Columbia River (Lake Roosevelt), where they own the China Bend Winery, just below Canada.

In 2007, the former Arlington family grounds became Camp Kalsman, a Jewish summer camp.<sup>[3]</sup>

In January 2016, it was reported founding member Love Israel was battling stage 4 cancer,<sup>[4]</sup> and on February 1 reportedly passed.<sup>[5]</sup>

## In film

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A film *It Takes A Cult*, about the Love Israel Family, director Eric Johannsen who grew up as part of it, was shown at the 2009 Seattle International Film Festival.<sup>[6]</sup><sup>[7]</sup>

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- It Takes a Cult* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1347347/>) on IMDb

## External links

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- Bringing The Vision Down To Earth by Serious Israel (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160309043202/http://www.context.org/iclib/ic02/isreal/>) at the Wayback Machine (archived March 9, 2016)
- Steve Allen's Son Brian Saw God on An Acid Trip: It Turned Him into Logic Israel (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160317180527/http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,20073299,00.html>) at the Wayback Machine (archived March 17, 2016)

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