Dear friends,

The word of God declares in Romans 15:8 “that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers.” This is a rather significant statement in the New Testament. Jesus confirmed all the promises given to Israel through the fathers, meaning the Hebrew Patriarchs.

This means God was affirming through His son all the covenant promises given to Israel during all the generations prior to Jesus. He did not annul them, He did not replace them, and most importantly, He did not fulfill them. Notice that if Paul would have said Jesus came to “fulfill” all the promises made to the fathers, then we would need to spiritualize all the promises to Israel and there would be nothing left to be fulfilled. Rather, it says Jesus came to affirm them! That means we do not see everything fulfilled yet for Israel, but we know it bears the affirmation of Jesus and this in itself is a guarantee of their fulfillment. It gives us full assurance that every single promise still outstanding for the Jewish people will be accomplished.

As the Christian Embassy, this is part of our high calling: to affirm to Israel all the great and glorious promises given to them by God. As you read in this issue about the return of the Bnei Menashe to Israel “from the east”, know that it bears the affirmation of heaven. As you read about His promise of comforting those who mourn in Zion, know that our help for Holocaust survivors bears the affirmation of heaven. And be encouraged, that your prayers and support for Israel bear the seal of approval and affirmation of heaven.

Finally, I want to encourage you personally. The same truth is valid for your life. “All the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God...” (2 Corinthians 1:20) So in the same way that God upholds all His promises to Israel, He will be faithful to fulfill all that He has promised to you in Christ Jesus.

With this I want to wish you and your family a very blessed holiday season.

Yours in Christ

DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER
ICEJ Executive Director
CONTENTS

4 MORE BNEI MENASHE ARE ON THE WAY!
BY DAVID PARSONS

12 CHRISTMAS AND ITS LESSONS IN HUMBILITY
BY DAVID PARSONS

18 ICEJ AND THE NATIONS

NEXT ISSUE
COMING UP IN JANUARY’S WORD FROM JERUSALEM

We will look at the Vision for our ministry for 2014, as well as the prospects for Israel and the region in the year ahead. Also, more exciting reports about our work among the nations.

To learn more about our upcoming events visit: www.icejusa.org/events
The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is excited about welcoming to Israel another group of the Bnei Menashe community making aliyah from India in late December. As with the group of 274 that arrived last January, the ICEJ again will be sponsoring the flights for the 200 Bnei Menashe expected to land at Ben-Gurion Airport sometime around Christmas Day.

Their journey home was made possible when the Israeli cabinet approved a resolution in October which will allow another 900 members of the Bnei Menashe tribe to move to Israel over the next two years. The government decision cleared the way for 200 Bnei Menashe to be brought by the end of this year, while 400 can come in 2014 and another 300 in 2015. All of the immigrants will be housed in a private absorption center run by Shavei Israel and will then be settled around the country.

The Bnei Menashe claim descent from the tribe of Manasseh, one of the ten northern tribes of Israel who were exiled by the Assyrian empire in 722 BC. Despite being cut off from the rest of the Jewish people for more than 2700 years, the Bnei Menashe still retained their distinct heritage, observed Sabbath and kept kosher.

Some 2,000 members of the community have already moved to Israel over the past decade. Another 7,000 are still in northeast India awaiting their turn to come home. They live in the remote provinces of Mizoram and Manipur, and are already taking Hebrew classes and study courses to ease their adjustment to a new life in Israel.

The immigration process for the Bnei Menashe is not easy. It involves sorting through many details for hundreds of families, from arranging several days of flights to providing food and setting up housing, language classes and childcare programs in Israel.

The arrival date for this latest group of 200 Bnei Menashe is just weeks from now. And we urgently need your help to meet our commitment to cover their flight costs!

Airfare from the Mizoram province to Israel, with transit via Delhi, is approximately $1,200 per person. Please consider paying for an airline seat for one of these Bnei Menashe. You can make the longings of generations come true, as they make their way home after 27 centuries of wandering among the nations.

Give on-line today at: http://www.icejusa.org/donate/bnei-menashe
According to some scholars, the Bnei Menashe community in northeast India is likely an offshoot of the Chinese Jewish community that began settling in Kaifeng, the capital of imperial China, some 2000 years ago. These were Jewish or Israelite exiles from Persia who had worked their way eastward as merchants along the ancient Silk Road, all the way to its eastern terminal in Kaifeng. There are parchments and engraved pillars that document their presence in the area back to some 20 centuries ago.

At its height, in the Middle Ages, Kaifeng’s Jewish community numbered as many as 5,000 people, with rabbis, synagogues and various communal institutions. But the Kaifeng Jewish community eventually dwindled in numbers to less than 1,000 in recent generations.

There are still some 500 Chinese Jews left in the area, and many are now interested in making aliyah to rejoin the mainstream Jewish people back in the Land of Israel. The first Kaifeng Jewish family to make aliyah in recent times was actually sponsored on their journey home by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem around ten years ago.

More Kaifeng Jews are now taking Hebrew language courses and religious studies in preparation for moving to Israel, with assistance from Shavei Israel, our partner in the Bnei Menashe aliyah. The ICEJ is helping to cover the flights for these Kaifeng Jewish families as well. For example, the ICEJ-Taiwan branch recently donated $25,000 for this unique aliyah operation.

If you would like to sponsor the return of a family of Kaifeng Jews to Israel, please make your donation on-line today at:

http://us.icej.org/aid/aliyah

Mirna Singsit is a lovely, bright 18-year-old member of the Bnei Menashe tribe from northeast India. She came from Manipur to Israel last January on a flight sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.

Mirna made aliyah with both of her parents and three brothers. She left behind a grandparent, four uncles and two aunts in India to fulfil her lifelong dream of coming home to Israel.

She was a student at Churachandpur University in Manipur, studying for a Bachelor’s Degree in political science, which she hopes to continue in Israel and eventually become a school teacher.

“I’m so very happy right now I can hardly express it in words”, Mirna said when she first landed in Israel. “Not only has this been my dream since I was born, but it has been my peoples’ dream for thousands of years and now it has finally come true.”

Her family stayed for several months in an absorption center in Givat Haviva before moving to their own apartment in the town of Migdal HaEmek, in the lower Galilee. But her ultimate dream is to live in Jerusalem, which she considers to be “the holiest place on earth”.

She now belongs to a Kuki youth club started by the Bnei Menashe in Israel to preserve their unique culture and fashion.

Mirna keeps up with friends and relatives back in India through social media, updating them with pictures of her and her friends visiting the beach in Nahariya, a waterfall on the Golan, or the artists’ colony in Safed. But she misses them dearly and is hoping to be re-united with them soon in the Land of Israel.
MICHAEL FREUND WAS A COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR in the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the late 1990s when he first started learning about the Bnei Menashe and their claim to be a lost tribe of Israel. He later visited their communities in northeast India and began to advocate for their right to make aliyah through his organization Shavei Israel (Israel Returns). Through his efforts, some 1700 Bnei Menashe moved to Israel between 2005 and 2007, but a change of law in India and a new government in Israel effectively blocked any further immigration. After five years of determined efforts, the door for their aliyah finally reopened late last year, and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem partnered with Shavei Israel by covering the costs of the first flights for 274 Bnei Menashe that arrived in January. The next group of some 200 immigrants is expected to arrive in December, and the ICEJ is once again sponsoring their flights from India. We spoke to Michael Freund about this historic endeavor.

Word From Jerusalem: Michael, you have been working hard over recent years to resume the aliyah of the Bnei Menashe from India. How much of a sense of accomplishment do you feel now that they have started coming home again?

Michael Freund: This is one of those moments when you really feel the hand of God at work in human history. The Bnei Menashe are the descendants of the ancient Israelite tribe of Manasseh, and their ancestors were exiled more than two thousand seven hundred years ago from this Land. Yet despite all their wanderings, they never forgot where they came from and they never lost sight of the dream of one day returning to Zion. Now it is happening before our very eyes. Those dreams are coming to reality. I think this is a development of profound historical significance.

WFJ: This is a miracle! But it is also the fruit of a lot of hard work, fighting bureaucracy, finding your way around some of the obstacles both in India and in Israel...

Freund: Exactly! Isaiah 49:22 says that the nations of the world are going to carry our sons and daughters back on their shoulders. The fact that the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has stepped...
up and put in the funds to cover the flights of these new immigrants is a tangible fulfillment of that verse and of other prophetic verses, too. Particularly in light of the past two thousand years of Jewish-Christian relations, which were unfortunately filled with such hostility and persecution, this new partnership that is developing is an incredible turn of events. It is a sign that there are Christians out there who sincerely love Israel and the Jewish people, who are willing to stand with us, who are willing to pray for us, and who are willing to put their money into helping bring Jews home. That is something that I, as a Jew, and many of my fellow Israelis have come to appreciate and welcome.

I would add that throughout this process of trying to resume the aliyah of the Bnei Menashe, there were many times when we had no resort left other than to lift our eyes to pray. And I know there were countless Christians out there who joined many Jews in praying for this effort, and God heeded those prayers.

WFJ: This is also a testimony to the power of God’s Word, that it always goes forth to accomplish its goal and never returns to Him void...

Freund: We know there are still sceptics out there on both sides. There are Jews who look askance at Christian support for aliyah and I know there are Christians who look at Christian Zionists and wonder why they are getting involved in this sort of thing. But to those critics, I say: “Open the Book! Open the Bible and you will find verse after verse which says this is how it is going to happen. The nations of the world have a role to play in the return to Zion.” So if those critics have a problem with this partnership, then they should take it up with the author of the Book. Because God is the One who declared this would come to pass.

WFJ: Yes! When God promised that He would “beckon to the Gentiles” to help with the aliyah, we at the Christian Embassy see ourselves in the context of those passages. We are the Gentiles who have answered that calling... Let me ask you about the Bnei Menashe families which you are getting to know as you help them prepare to come to Israel. What are they like?

Freund: I’ve known many of them for many years. Over a decade ago we opened two educational centers in northeast India to prepare them for the day when they would be able to move to Israel. Teaching them Hebrew, about Torah, about Israel. The Bnei Menashe are generally a very calm people outwardly, but when it finally comes time to make the journey they get very emotional. You can see the anticipation in their eyes. They know the day of deliverance has come. No doubt, when the prophet Isaiah said so long ago: “Fear not! For I am with you! I will bring your descendants from the east.” I think he had this day in mind.

WFJ: You have helped other Jews from around the world come home. What makes the Bnei Menashe distinct?

Freund: Most of the Jews who have come back to Israel are originally from the southern kingdom of Judah. The Bnei Menashe, however, are part of the “lost tribes” from the northern kingdom of Israel exiled 2700 years ago. So this is also the reunification of those divided kingdoms from long ago. And in fact, the prophet Ezekiel spoke of the two branches – Judah and Ephraim, or Israel – being brought back together.

WFJ: And He promised to make them “one nation on the mountains of Israel”...

Freund: Exactly! These are promises that are happening now. On the same flights from Uzbekistan, we have both Russian Jews and Bnei Menashe families sitting side-by-side and making aliyah together – Judah and Israel coming home as one.

WFJ: The Bnei Menashe already in Israel have a reputation for being good workers, patriotic citizens, strong family ties. Do you expect that of the remaining 7000 still waiting to come?

Freund: Absolutely! There is no better way for people to bless Israel nowadays than to help with the aliyah of the Bnei Menashe. They are quality immigrants. They are a blessing to Israel and the Jewish people. They are deeply Zionistic. They are people of faith. They raise beautiful children. They serve in the Israeli army. They defend the land. They are productive and committed members of Israeli society. They make this country a better place. Particularly now, when Israel is facing so much hostility and so many threats around the world, nothing could be more important than to help the Bnei Menashe come home to strengthen this nation.
Let’s improve the Home for Holocaust Survivors in 2014!

BY ESTERA WIEJA

The Christian Embassy’s unique assisted-living home for Holocaust survivors in Haifa has proven to be an incredibly timely and beneficial project. The Haifa Home continues to go through new phases of renovation and expansion and, in reality, has now become a complex of apartments and community facilities taking up nearly an entire city block.

Struggling Holocaust survivors come seeking a caring place to stay and find it at the Haifa Home, thanks to the ICEJ’s many generous supporters over recent years. With every new resident, Christians are able to express our love and concern for the Jewish people by assisting those most deserving of our compassion.

Recently, we were able to expand the community dining hall and install a new kitchen, which were sorely needed due to the growing number of residents. Now, more expansion plans are underway as new apartments are acquired and refurbished in the neighborhood to take in additional Holocaust survivors.

We want to invite you to partner with us in this very special project. Here are some of the current needs at the Haifa Home as we head into the new year. Please take a moment to consider what you can do to help:

1) To provide additional living units for Holocaust survivors, we are seeking to secure a building adjacent to one of our current homes, at a cost of $200,000. The building will provide rooms for four residents, but will need renovations, new water lines installed, electrical repairs, and new furniture.

2) More renovations are needed in several apartments already added to the Haifa Home. In one such building there are enough rooms for nine new residents, while four more rooms are planned in a building down the street. These improvements will cost $90,000 and will involve installing new floors, doors, windows, water pipes, electrical wiring, appliances and furniture.

3) One of the serious needs of these elderly Holocaust survivors is proper medical attention. Thus, a dental clinic was set up at the Home which also serves Holocaust survivors in the local community. The clinic still needs updates and dental equipment, at a cost of $8,000.

4) Many of the survivors are aging fast and have become immobile, meaning they often spend all day indoors. We would like to build terraces for apartments on the ground floor of the main building to enable those tenants to spend more time in the sun and fresh air. The cost for constructing small patios for them is $12,000.

We need your urgent help to cover the expenses for these latest expansions and renovations at the Haifa Home. This is your chance to bring joy and comfort to precious Holocaust survivors in need.

Donate on-line today by visiting: http://www.icejusa.org/expanding-haifa-home
Zvi Cohen and the train to nowhere

One of the newest residents at the ICEJ’s Haifa Home for Holocaust survivors is Zvi Cohen

BY BIRTE SCHOLZ

Now 83 years old, he was married for more than 50 years but is alone these days and suffering from poor health. He constantly needs a respirator but could not afford one. Yet since arriving at the survivors’ home two months ago, he finally has the companionship and medical care he needs. So Zvi is very happy now, after a lifetime of suffering and trauma. This is his story of survival.

Zvi was born in Romania in 1931. His father was a tailor while his mother raised Zvi and his four sisters.

He was seven years old when World War II broke out. Zvi recalls beautiful Shabbats with his family before the German invasion, but their quiet life was suddenly shattered. German troops rounded up the Jewish families on a cold winter day and packed them onto a train.

"I didn’t understand at first why people were lying on the floor of the carriages", Zvi explained. "I didn’t realise they were dead. They had suffocated, unable to breathe."

"Every two days the Germans stopped the train, opened the cattle wagons, threw out the dead and moved on. It was hell."

The train was supposed to take them to a German-occupied area in Russia. But the Germans eventually turned the train around and returned the Jews to Romania.

"It was ten days on the train, back and forth", said Zvi. "Every other day, the Germans kept stopping the train to open the doors and throw out the dead."

Once when the train stopped, he jumped out to find some water for his mother and sisters. Suddenly, he saw the train had started to move.

"I ran quickly and grabbed the handle of the car and it got stuck in my hand", Zvi recounted. "I still suffer as a result of disability."

Finally, they were brought back home and somehow managed to stay alive the rest of the war. Zvi’s father had been taken to a forced labour camp at the beginning of the war and they never saw him again. But Zvi dug a pit close to the house where the rest of the family could hide if needed. Every time there was a bombing raid, the family hid there and was saved.

"One day it was the Germans bombing and then it was the Russians bombing. Because of all the bombings, we had no house to live in. We lived in a shabby room and barely survived", he said.

Eventually, the Joint Distribution Committee took his family to a Jewish refugee camp, where there was food and clothing... and hope!

Zvi made aliyah to Israel in 1950 and got married in 1965. But his poor physical condition from the war meant he had trouble holding down a permanent job. The marriage suffered and eventually ended. He has two sons from the marriage but hardly ever sees them.

"I’m happy that I have come to a friendly place", Zvi remarked about the Haifa Home. "Here there are people who care about each other and I get all I need. At least for the rest of my life, I can live in peace."
DURING THE HANUKKAH AND CHRISTMAS SEASONS this December, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem will be reaching out once again to needy Jewish and Arab families throughout the Holy Land with holiday distributions via our ICEJ AID department, giving testimony to the “Light of the World” born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago.

Bringing light at Hanukkah!
During Hanukkah, we will be sponsoring holiday festivities once again for several needy Jewish communities, especially so that underprivileged children and the elderly can enjoy this joyous celebration.

Hanukkah is known as the Festival of Lights or the “Feast of Dedication” (John 10:22). It marks the courageous victory of the Maccabees over oppressive Syrian-Greek rule and the miracle of light that came when the Temple was cleansed and re-dedicated for service.

Every year at Hanukkah, the ICEJ seeks to bless Jewish families and individuals in need on behalf of Christians around the world. This includes sponsoring holiday celebrations for disadvantaged Israeli youths and struggling Holocaust survivors, as well as donating toys and games for children, plus blankets and heaters for the elderly and new immigrants just at the onset of winter.

Much of this outreach is done in cooperation with Israeli social workers and local charitable organizations, and the holiday gift baskets come with special Hanukkah greeting cards from the Christian Embassy in the name of our worldwide family of friends and supporters.

Spreading Christmas cheer!
Then as Christmas nears, the ICEJ will be sponsoring a number of holiday assistance projects among the Arab Christian community in Israel and the Palestinian areas. Working through local Arab pastors and churches, the ICEJ sponsors Christmas gatherings and the distribution of holiday gifts, clothing and food throughout the Holy Land. This brings warmth and cheer to hundreds of Christian and even Muslim families in Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem’s Old City, Jericho and many other cities in the land of Christ’s birth.

One of the ICEJ’s faithful partners in spreading Christmas cheer each year is the First Baptist Church of Bethlehem, pastored by Dr. Naim Khoury and his son, Rev. Steven Khoury. They shepherd the largest Evangelical church in the West Bank, and every December the congregation hosts the biggest Christmas banquet in Bethlehem, with over one thousand in attendance.

Over recent years the ICEJ has been a major funder of this holiday banquet, which draws not only local Arab Christians but also many Muslims as well. Besides the bountiful meal, there are several choirs from area churches that lead in the singing of traditional Christmas carols and other worship songs. In addition, Dr. Khoury always delivers a strong message on the reason for Christ’s coming and, without fail, dozens of Bethlehem’s residents respond to his impassioned altar calls.

Please partner with the ICEJ to bring warmth and joy and peace to hundreds of Jewish and Arab families this holiday season. Time is short, so make your online donation today at:

http://www.icejusa.org/relief-work
THE CHRISTMAS SEASON means so much to the native Christians of Bethlehem, as they are immensely proud to live in the city where Jesus was born. Amid all the busy holiday activities, the largest Christmas banquet in Bethlehem each year is hosted by the First Baptist Church of Bethlehem, pastored by Dr. Naim Khoury and his son, Rev. Steven Khoury. Together, they shared with us what Christmas is really like in the town of Christ’s birth.

Dr. Khoury was born into a Greek Orthodox family in the Old City of Jerusalem. But after being called into ministry as a Baptist pastor, he moved to Bethlehem over 30 years ago to start an Evangelical congregation.

"I felt called by God to go set up a 'lighthouse' in Bethlehem", said Dr. Khoury. "There was no room for the Lord two thousand years ago, but I went to help people find room for him in their hearts."

The "lighthouse" he established, the First Baptist Church of Bethlehem, today has over 400 members - making it the largest Evangelical congregation in the West Bank. Dr. Khoury feels privileged to minister among the people of this historic town.

"It’s an honour to serve the Lord in Bethlehem and to let the people of this special city know who is the real Saviour of the world", he said.

"Christmas is a very important family time in Bethlehem", Dr. Khoury noted. "We have big meals together. The children receive presents and clothes, of course. We also distribute gifts to hundreds of needy children all across town." The highlight of the season for his church is their annual Christmas banquet, co-sponsored by the ICEJ, and many local Muslims are also invited to take part.

"We try to make Christmas come alive. To touch the hearts of the people, that is our aim", assured Dr. Khoury. "The best gift someone can have is to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior."

His son Steven explained that - unlike the ‘commercial creep’ in most Western societies - Christmas observances in Bethlehem only begin in earnest around the first of December.

"In early December, the municipality of Bethlehem starts decorating the streets with lights and signs, and this is the cue for all the stores to begin decorating", Steven said. "Around the 20th of the month, the big Christmas parties start. And the activity builds to a crescendo on December 24th when all the local churches show up on Manger Square to let the world know we are here."

The traditional parade by all the local congregations past the Church of the Nativity on Christmas Eve has grown into a massive community gathering.

"The young men in each church march in fancy scout uniforms and play bagpipes and drums", Steven said. "But in recent years, our church has decided to focus on Jesus Christ. Rather than get caught up in the commercialism, we are carrying banners with Bible verses and Christian slogans that let people know our only hope is in Jesus."

There is also the Midnight Mass in the Church of the Nativity, and carolling services in the ‘Shepherds Field’ just down the hill in Beit Sahour. And Christmas observances in Bethlehem continue on into early January, when the Orthodox churches mark the birth of Christ according to their calendar.
CHRISTMAS AND ITS LESSONS IN HUMILITY

BY DAVID PARSONS
A

S WE REVISIT THE CHRISTMAS STORY this holiday season, the Gospel narratives invariably take us back to the humble setting of Christ’s birth. Indeed, the Hebrew prophets had foretold that the coming of Israel’s promised Messiah-King, the Son of David, would be marked by meekness.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zechariah 9:9)

Thus the Gospel of Matthew recounts that “Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king…” (2:1).

Now the quaint town of Bethlehem was worlds apart from the lavish palaces of the ruling “king” of Israel in those days - Herod the Great. And the sharp contrast between the two surely was not lost on Joseph and Mary.

The couple had arrived after a long journey at Joseph’s ancestral home of Bethlehem, which had once delivered to Israel her greatest king, David, but was now a small hamlet of poor shepherds. The local inhabitants built their homes over the mouths of caves, and it was in the inner recesses of one of those caves that Jesus was born and laid in a feeding trough for livestock.

Yet each day, as Mary took the infant Jesus outside for a little fresh air and sunshine, off in the distance she could see Herodium - the grandiose palace Herod had built for himself on a commanding hilltop only four miles southeast of Bethlehem.

Mary had been assured that the son in her arms was destined to be “great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:32-33)

And yet his birth was lowly and humble, just as his death would be. By comparison, the man then ruling over Israel was haughty and cruel - in life and in death.

A monumental builder

An impressive exhibition recently opened at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem which has shed new light on the historic figure of Herod the Great. He is indeed a towering figure in the region’s history, and sought to bridge the wide chasm between Jewish and Roman cultures.

Herod was called “Great” because he was a great builder. His legacy starts with Herodium, the peculiar shaved-off mountain peak located in the Judean wilderness some 15 kilometers south of Jerusalem. Here, Herod built for himself the largest palatial complex of its day in the entire Roman Empire. Serving as a summer palace as well as his eventual resting place, every conceivable luxury was incorporated into its design, including opulent baths, swimming pools, gardens and a seven-hundred seat theatre.

Herod also built the formidable mountain fortress at Masada, and the spectacular port city of Caesarea, complete with a hippodrome and amphitheater. In addition, he built several other fortresses throughout the land dedicated to Roman emperors as part of his constant drive to court their favor.

A puzzling persona, Herod sought to appeal to the Jews as well. So he also built the rectangular Machpela in Hebron over the burial cave of Abraham and the patriarchs. But Herod’s masterpiece was his refurbishing of the Second Temple, which he expanded southward to include a lavish shopping mall and the colonnaded underground chambers of the Hulda Gates.

A conflicted character

According to scholars, Herod was from a prominent Idumean family that had married into the Hasmonean dynasty. Thus, he was part Edomite and part Jewish.

The Idumeans were a former enemy of Israel that had been conquered and converted to Judaism. The Hasmoneans, on the other hand, were the famous Maccabean family that had led the revolt against Syrian-Greek tyranny in 167 BC, which is remembered at Hanukkah.

There was one problem, however. The Maccabean family installed themselves as rulers and priests over Israel, rather than returning to power the royal lineage of David and the Zadokite priesthood. By the time Jesus was born in a lowly manger in Bethlehem, there was a general hope among many Israelites that not only would the new Roman oppressors be overthrown, but that out of the turmoil the proper kingly and priestly lines would also be restored.

Thus Herod the Great sat on a throne that rightfully belonged to the royal House of David, to which Jesus belonged.

The New Testament portrays this usurper as ruthless and highly insecure, even to the point of ordering the massacre of innocent babes in Bethlehem. The writings of the noted
Jewish historian Josephus Flavius concur, recounting that Herod also slaughtered his beautiful second wife, Mariamne, and three of his sons in similar fits of jealousy.

Thus, Herod’s lust for power and notorious cruelty became widely known. Josephus records these words from Emperor Augustus: “I’d rather be Herod’s pig than his son.”

The last years of Herod’s life were marked by disease, envy and murder. While on his death bed in his winter palace in Jericho, Herod worried that no one would mourn his death, and so he ordered the arrest of some 1,000 Judeans who were to be executed on the day he died. Shortly thereafter, his overweight corpse was carried to its final resting place in Herodium, while his closest aides - disgusted by their master’s dying wish - released the detained Judeans unharmed.

Idumean by birth, Jewish by religion and Roman by culture, Herod was an architectural genius but also a cruel and egocentric madman.

Opposite worlds
Returning to the vast contrast between Herod and Jesus, we can see that one was born into privilege and royal splendour, while the other entered this world in the most primitive of surroundings.

Rather than building himself grand palaces like Herod, Jesus never truly had a place to lay his head (Matthew 8:20).

Herod called himself “Great” and ruled through fear, whereas Jesus declared, “I am gentle and humble in heart; learn of me and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

Herod built an earthly kingdom through force of might and used slave labor to erect monuments to himself. Jesus declared his kingdom was not of this world, and raised up committed disciples using words of love and truth.

Even in death, Herod sought to inflict pain and suffering on others, while Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6).

Indeed, Jesus took on a suffering servant’s role for the sake of the world He had created in order to redeem fallen humanity to God. “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:8)

What good news then is the lowly birth of Jesus in Bethlehem in the days of Herod the king!

DAVID PARSONS is media director for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.
Emergency relief for the Philippines
ICEJ joins unique Christian-Israeli effort to aid victims of Typhoon Haiyan

The scenes of destruction in the central Philippines from Typhoon Haiyan this past month were horrific, as thousands of people were killed and over 600,000 lost their homes.

In response, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem joined a coalition of Christian and Israeli humanitarian groups in a collective effort to bring emergency relief to the impacted areas. The coalition also included the Israeli relief arm IsraAid and the non-profit Shai Fund.

In the first step of this joint Christian-Israeli effort, a special team of Israeli and German doctors, nurses and paramedics quickly made their way to the Philippines to bring urgently-needed emergency relief. Bishop Daniel Balais, national director of the ICEJ-Philippines branch, worked with our network of local churches in the worst-hit areas to help coordinate their activities. ICEJ-Germany was especially helpful in mobilizing medical and aid workers and resources for this effort.

Upon arrival, the Israeli-Christian team consulted with officials of the World Health Organisation and decided to concentrate its efforts on the western coast of the hard-hit island of Leyte, a region that had received little relief so far. Many people had not eaten for days and the clinics had run out of medicine. There was no food, no drinking water, no gas and no electricity.

Doctors in the local hospitals relayed their greatest needs for medical and relief supplies and the items were purchased and loaded onto trucks for the journey by ferry from Cebu. The latest reports indicate the team has set up a mobile clinic to serve some 10 towns along this battered coastline. And relief supplies are being distributed with the help of local churches.

This is an extraordinary project through which Christians and Israelis together are helping the hurting victims of this major natural disaster. You can support this important relief effort by donating on-line today at:
www.icejusa.org/international-relief

In tribute to Zvi Givati

The global family of the Christian Embassy lost one of our most beloved members in November with the passing of Zvi Givati, who served as the ICEJ’s Israeli liaison for our first 25 years and did so much to help us get established and accepted in Jerusalem.

During his long and distinguished public career, Zvi was an officer in the Israeli army and in the national prison service, as well as a special Israeli envoy to French-speaking West Africa. In 1980, he assisted in the founding of the ICEJ and soon joined as a full-time staff member.

In his capacity as our Israeli liaison, Zvi did more than just help us obtain staff visas and represent our interests to Israeli officials. He also gave the Christian Embassy credibility in the nation when it was so needed in those early years.

But his greatest joy and contribution came from reaching out to Christians everywhere to build support for the country he so cherished. In these tireless endeavours, Zvi won his way into the hearts of countless Christians worldwide. He truly amassed an incredibly large family of Christian friends and admirers around the world who were deeply touched by his life, his love for Israel, and his honourable and gracious qualities.

Jewish-Christian relations have grown immensely closer over the past generation, and Zvi Givati played a unique role in helping to forge these ties here in the Land of Israel.

Zvi and his late wife Esther will always remain of blessed memory in our hearts.

DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER
ICEJ Executive Director
JANUARY
The ICEJ sponsored the flights of 274 members of the Bnei Menashe tribe from India making aliyah to Israel.

FEBRUARY
The ICEJ leadership visited six West African countries to set up national branches and meet with key government and church leaders.

MARCH
ICEJ AID assisted hundreds of Israeli families with Passover gift baskets, including for many Holocaust survivors and needy new immigrants.

APRIL
The ICEJ partnered with Yad Vashem to host the annual Christian Leadership Seminar on Holocaust education during Yom HaShoah observances in Israel.

MAY
ICEJ staff visited the Ruppin Academic Center near Netanya, where we are funding a special scholarship program for Ethiopian Jewish students enrolled at the college.

JUNE
ICEJ leaders attended a mass rally of 100,000 Christians gathered in Manaus, Brazil to pray for Israel.
DECEMBER
The ICEJ will again host Jewish and Christian leaders in Jerusalem for its annual Hanukkah/Christmas reception to celebrate the holiday season of light.

AUGUST
The ICEJ welcomed 68 new French Jewish immigrants to Israel on an aliyah flight from Paris sponsored by the Christian Embassy.

SEPTEMBER
The ICEJ’s annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration once again drew thousands of Christians from around the world to Jerusalem.

OCTOBER
The new kitchen and dining hall expansion was completed at the ICEJ’s special Home for Holocaust survivors in Haifa.

NOVEMBER
The ICEJ expanded its video production team in preparation for the launch of a new half-hour teaching show on GOD-TV.

JULY
ICEJ ARISE hosted its summer tour for young adults, with a program that included visits to Bible sites, lectures on modern Israel, and practical ‘hands-on’ service projects.
THE APOSTLE PAUL devoted his life to preaching the gospel in the nations in order to win people into the Kingdom of God. He pictured himself as a priest offering a sacrifice to God. The offering was Gentile believers who had been made acceptable to God because they had been sanctified and set apart by the Holy Spirit for God’s service. The Holy Spirit active in the lives of these believers showed God had accepted them (Acts 15:8-9). All this happened because of the redeeming power of the message of the resurrected Lord Jesus in the hearts of those who received the Good News.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem also desires that followers of Christ worldwide would be an acceptable offering to God. We want souls to be saved and the Church to be educated in God’s dealings with Israel!

Our prayer is to be able to equip the local Church to stay in line with God’s purposes in the world today. The message of the faithfulness of God to His covenant promises to Israel builds faith, brings clarity of the spirit and mind, and sheds light on today’s chaotic events, especially in the Middle East. And when it comes to God’s dealings with Israel, He has promised a special blessing to the ones co-operating with Him in this dimension of His vast Kingdom! (Genesis 12:1-3, Psalm 122:6)

This is why we travel out from Jerusalem into the nations and serve the local Churches with the word of God. We share the Gospel and at the same time help believers to understand from Scripture about God’s grace and His covenant-keeping love toward Israel. In recent weeks, our messengers have gone out to Germany, Ireland and Finland, among other countries.

Ireland and Finland
In October, ICEJ International Director Rev. Juha Ketola and Arise Director Jani Salokangas visited Northern Ireland to minister in different locations in the Belfast area. This included Pastor Glenn Dunlop’s Karmel City Church, Moira Pentecostal Church pastored by David Goudy, and Carryduff Elim Church with Pastor George Ritchie. ICEJ-Ireland national director Brian Silvester hosted their stay and ministered as well.

The ministry team then travelled to Finland for the ICEJ Finnish Branch’s annual “Taste of the Feast of Tabernacles”
gathering, organized by national director Kari Niemi and his staff. Held at the local Pentecostal church in the city of Turku, along the west coast of Finland, the full day of meetings featured a wide variety of music and dance, as well as an official greeting from the deputy Israeli ambassador to Finland, Ms. Arezoo Hersel. Former ICEJ Executive Director Rev. Malcolm Hedding and Rev. Steven Khoury from Bethlehem also joined the celebrations as keynote speakers. Both visitors also toured and spoke in several cities across Finland, ministering powerfully in the word of God together with Kari Niemi, Rev. Ketola and Jani Salokangas.

**Germany**

ICEJ international speaker Doron Schneider made several ministry trips to Germany in recent months, and reported that the meetings were all fruitful and well attended. One highlight was a men’s conference at the popular Christian retreat center in Bad Gandersheim. Over 1,000 men attended the weekend gathering, where Doron spoke alongside ICEJ Board Chairman Rev. Ingolf Ellsfel. The Holy Spirit was present to touch many hearts and lives, and the reactions on the Israel teachings were often quite moving.

“I want to apologize for my anti-Israel attitude all these years,” one man told Doron afterwards. “Today my heart was changed and I really love God’s people now.”

“In theory I understood all about Israel and God’s plan, but after this sermon I received a deep love for them”, an elderly lady shared after another meeting.

**ICEJ-MEXICO LEADS ISRAEL TOUR**

IN NOVEMBER, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem hosted a group of 160 pro-Israel pastors and ministry leaders from all across Mexico during their tour of the Holy Land. The group was headed by ICEJ-Mexico national director Dr. Carlos Quiroa, who has an influential ministry both within Mexico and throughout Latin America. He has made supporting Israel through the work of the ICEJ an important part of his vision.

In Mexico, Dr. Quiroa oversees an annual parade in Mexico City that draws nearly one million Evangelical Christians each year. In recent years, this “March of Glory” has been marked by tens of thousands of marchers carrying Israeli flags to show their strong support for the Jewish state. Dr. Quiroa currently is working to appoint regional leaders in all 32 Mexican states. He is also connecting our ministry to key Evangelical leaders in other Latin American countries. Plans are for the ICEJ leadership team to visit Mexico City in April next year for a series of large gatherings, to participate in the March of Glory, and to meet with ICEJ national directors from Central America to discuss broadening our Spanish language outreach.
“Let us go now even unto Bethlehem.” (Luke 2:15)

THE TENSION ON THE OTHER SIDE of Israel’s security fence is real— you can feel it when you cross over. Israel was compelled to build this fence (which in some areas looks like a wall) because of the wave of suicide bombers that entered Israel from the West Bank during the Second Intifada and attempted to murder as many Israeli citizens as possible. This barrier to terrorism has been successful in keeping the bad guys out. But now these bad guys are boxed-in on the other side with good guys, and turning on them. Specifically, they are targeting the ones who have Jesus in their hearts.

From the beginning, while reaching out to the Jewish people in the land of Israel, the ICEJ has also served Israeli Arab communities as well as Palestinian Christians. It has been a quiet work because the envy and pent-up rage of trouble makers could be directed toward those who have received money, material necessities or services, particularly if that assistance came from a pro-Israel Christian organization. Therefore, the ICEJ reaches out with care, wisdom, discretion and prayer, or this help could bring, however unintended, great harm.

On a hot August day, Nicole Yoder and Yudit Setz, co-directors of ICEJ’s AID department, brought me along to Bethlehem, Beit Jalla and Beit Sahour, Palestinian communities on the other side of the wall that are cities so close together you’d think they were all one place. A Palestinian pastor and ministry partner was there to pick us up on the other side. The sun-scorched streets and neighborhoods were quiet. It was eerie.

To see how the ICEJ is helping the desperately needy, the Pastor had made arrangements for us to be guests in two homes. Though both families were very, very poor (work is largely prohibitive—most Muslims don’t employ Christians, and the unpredictability of the checkpoints makes work on the other side virtually impossible), both offered us cold drinks, followed by hot drinks, crackers and chocolate wafers. The three of us from ICEJ were already full from our breakfasts, but we received their hospitable sacrifice, served with affection to each of us, from their trays.

In one of the homes, impossible-to-tame mold pock-marked the clean and tidy house, chunks of plaster were missing from the walls, and we learned that the father, mother, grandmother and children all must sleep in the same room. The family told us that their bright and lovely teenage daughter cannot go outside unaccompanied because of a practice committed by some Muslim men there: they defile Palestinian Christian girls thinking this will coerce them to marry their Islamic offender, which over time, would decimate the Christian community. The father of this family is confined to a wheel chair and the only income for this household (besides help from ICEJ) comes from the sale of odds and ends from the store in the entryway of their house—a store that is no bigger than walk-in closets in American homes.

And yet, with all this, the father’s radiant face looked at us with the love of Christ. The whole family was full of love and gratitude. Without the help of Christians from the other side, they could not make it. The ICEJ, steadily and quietly, is providing food and necessary things for this family and many others like it, and this is how they live.

Once outside, the pastor shouted out in Arabic, “Where’s Jesus?” to one of the little Christian Palestinian boys. The response we all anticipated was, of course, “In my heart.” This little one, however boldly shouted to the skies, “In Beit Sahour!” We all smiled because he was right. Most scholars agree that Jesus was born in one of the caves just a block or two around the corner, and this child knows it. Jesus, in Beit Sahour, and Bethlehem, and Beit Jalla!

The father in the wheel chair, his daughter who cannot go out alone, and this little boy who lives around the corner from where his Savior was born, are among those who need our help and prayers. We’ll make sure your gift to ICEJ Aid reaches them. We need to let them know that they are not on the other side of love.

Dr. Carrie Burns is the Educational Programs Developer for the US branch of the ICEJ. She was recently in Jerusalem to witness Isaiah 40:1 in action through the ICEJ and to share her insights and impressions on what she saw.
Join the growing number of Christians worldwide who are partnering with the ICEJ to help Israelis in need and who understand the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of the Jews to the land of their forefathers.

COVENANT PARTNER
Become a Covenant Partner with the ICEJ when you support our work in Israel at a giving level of at least $30 a month. In return, you will receive from our ministry the following resources:

- A copy of our Word from Jerusalem magazine
- Online access to the digital publication of our Word from Jerusalem magazine
- Online access to free teaching from the ICEJ’s annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem
- A special year-end gift

Send in your commitment for 2014 today to icejusa@icejusa.org and receive a beautiful partnership certificate or go to www.icejusa.org/partner

AMBASSADORIAL PARTNER
Become an Ambassadorial Partner with the ICEJ when you support our work in Israel at a giving level of at least $100 a month. In return, you will receive from our ministry the following resources:

- A copy of our Word from Jerusalem magazine
- Online access to the digital publication of our Word from Jerusalem magazine
- Online access to free teaching from the ICEJ’s annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem
- Exclusive access to the ICEJ’s quarterly Mid-East Update conference call from Jerusalem
- An invitation to attend our annual ICEJ-USA Leadership Briefing
- A special year-end gift

Be a part of that future generation spoken of in Psalm 102, and know that you are partnering with the Lord in His work to restore Zion, for the set time has come!
The US Branch has been extremely busy in recent months. Many opportunities arose to stand with Israel and the Jewish people, as well as to share our message and biblical teachings in a number of churches.

**WEDDING BELLS**
On September 7th the US branch took a break from ministry to celebrate the marriage of one of their long time staff members, Teresa Simila to Jeremy Carney. Teresa has served on staff for the ICEJ, first in Jerusalem and then in the USA, for almost ten years. And while this “Jersey girl” felt a bit like a fish-out-of-water moving to Tennessee, where the US Administrative Headquarters is located, the move certainly paid off as she met the love of her life. Teresa serves as the Special Projects Coordinator of the ICEJ USA.

**US BRANCH TOUR TO THE FEAST**
This year the US and Canadian Branches joined up for a joint tour to the Feast of Tabernacles. The North American Tour was blessed to have the leadership of Dr. Carrie Burns as well as to sit under the teachings of Rev. Malcolm Hedding. One participant, Shay Kasper, wrote, “It was my 33rd Feast... to be in the midst of “prophecy being fulfilled” was/is a thrill! This is the one time of the year I KNOW I am doing the right thing!!!” For information on the 2014 Feast Tour email us at icejusa@icejusa.org or call us at (888) 772-7732.

**JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS**
Susan Michael, ICEJ USA Director, finds she is invited to address as many Jewish as Christian audiences these days. In addition to leading a small Rabbi-Pastor Torah study in October she addressed a larger gathering of some 120 Pastors and Jewish leaders hosted by Christ Fellowship in Palm Beach Gardins, FL. On Nov. 24th she spoke to the South Florida Summit for Israel hosted in Temple Beth El in West Palm Beach where Jews and Christians came together in support of Israel.

**CAPITOL HILL, WASHINGTON, DC**
Susan addressed the Leaders’ Advocacy Session at the International Allies Foundation Washington Conference along with distinguished Congressmen Doug Lamborn, Brad Sherman and Gene Green; Senator Ted Cruz and Israel’s Ambassador to the UN, Ron Poser. She spoke again the next morning at a breakfast sponsored by Israel’s Ministry of Tourism. The meetings emphasized the need for Christian advocacy on behalf of Israel and how better to educate and mobilize churches and Christian leaders.

**FLORIDA, TEXAS AND CALIFORNIA**
Dr. Juergen Buehler, ICEJ Executive Director, Rev. Juha Ketola, ICEJ International Director and Susan Michael, ICEJ USA Director crossed the country meeting with scores of Pastors as well as addressing conferences and churches. Dr. Jack Hayford hosted Juergen and Juha in Los Angeles where they met with Pastors and Jewish leaders. They spoke at Church on the Way Church, The Rock Church as well as Arbol de Vida/Tree of Life Church. Susan spoke at Liberty Counsel's Women Impacting the Nation conference in Orlando, FL along with speakers such as Vonette Bright and Star Parker. It was a busy two weeks but many doors opened for further impact of the ICEJ in the USA.

For more details on upcoming ICEJ events, or to request a speaker in your area call: (615) 895-9830
WWW.ICEJUSA.ORG/EVENTS
LEARN • SERVE • TRAVEL • WORSHIP

Humanitarian Aid & Teaching Tour to Israel

MAY 28 - JUNE 6, 2014

JOIN US FOR THIS UNIQUE TOUR. PARTICIPATE IN HUMANITARIAN AID PROJECTS WHILE ALSO TOURING AND STUDYING TOGETHER.

www.icejusa.org/tours or (888) 772-7732

Request a tour brochure at icejusa@icejusa.org or (888) 772-7732
http://www.icejusa.org/feast-tour
DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT ISRAEL? WE HAVE ANSWERS!

IsraelAnswers is the web’s most comprehensive educational resource for those seeking the truth about Israel and Christian Zionism. Grasp the basic facts with straightforward issue briefs and frequently asked questions. Browse our links and resources sections for more in-depth analysis.

IsraelAnswers.com is a project of the US Branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem dedicated to sharing the facts and spreading the truth about Israel and Christian Zionism. Non-partisan, objective, and balanced, IsraelAnswers provides a unique online educational resource for the Christian world – and well beyond.

www.IsraelAnswers.org
A project of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem