THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL
FROM A BARREN TO FRUITFUL LAND

BRANCH REPORTS
YAD VASHEM 60TH ANNIVERSARY
Dear Friends,

The troubling news out of Ukraine and of Russia’s moves to annex the Crimean peninsula remind us once again of just how fragile our world order is. In Daniel 7, the great world powers are portrayed as insatiable beasts, which are set to “devour much flesh.” Driven by greed and evil ambitions these kingdoms conquer, suppress, and inflict suffering.

Yet at the same time, Daniel sees the God of Israel having the last word. As Daniel asked the angels to understand the interpretation of the vision of the four beasts, the messenger of God replied: “… the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever” (Daniel 7:18).

God will have the last word! Heaven rules!

This truth resides over our prayers and concerns for Ukraine. Just as this magazine goes to print, we have received an emergency appeal from the Jewish Agency to help rescue Jews from Ukraine and bring them to Israel. Anti-Semitism is on the rise. Neo-Nazi elements have brazenly taken to the streets. “Death to the Jews” was just sprayed on the walls of the main synagogue in Simferopol. Many Jews want to leave the country.

Over recent decades the ICEJ has gained extensive experience on the ground in Ukraine helping tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews make aliyah to Israel. And, we have committed to help now as well.

Please stand with us as we assist as many Jews as possible to escape the perils of the Ukrainian crisis and reach safety in Israel. The costs per person per flight are just above US$600, which enables them to also take as much of their private possessions as possible to Israel.

Prayerfully consider what you can do to stand with us in this urgent matter. Please give generously and in time to act!

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ Executive Director
Next month we will cover our Passover distribution to needy Jewish families in Israel, which engaged our entire Jerusalem staff in the hands-on social aid work of the ICEJ. We will also tell you about new doors opening for our ministry in Africa and around the world. And, there will be exciting new developments to report on our Feast of Tabernacles gathering this coming October.

Learn more about our upcoming events at: www.icejusa.org
Israel today is a remarkable country. Though small and threatened on all sides, it is nonetheless making major contributions to the world in such areas as hi-tech and medical advances.

Israel is also leading the way in agricultural innovations and water conservation. It pioneered drip irrigation and currently recycles over 80 percent of its wastewater, far outstripping any other nation. And, although over half of its land is still arid desert, Israel exports high-quality farm produce in all seasons, even while its neighbors must import food to feed their populations.

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It also would surprise many to learn that the Israeli people are blessed with one of the most nutritious food supplies in the world. In a recent global survey by the Bloomberg news agency of the world’s healthiest countries, Israel ranked an impressive sixth, far ahead of the United States at number 33.

Yet the land of Israel was not always so fruitful, and the Jewish people certainly were not known for having a “green thumb.” In fact, the land lay desolate for all the centuries of Jewish exile, and in both Christian and Muslim lands where the Jews were dispersed, they were largely forbidden from owning land. This meant they had basically lost the ability to farm and had to rely on the Gentiles to feed themselves. This was true even up to some 100 years ago when Jews first began to return to Eretz Israel and tried to scratch out a living in the barren fields.

Yet the law and the prophets both had warned the ancient Israelites that this would be their fate if they turned their backs on God. The land itself would “vomit out” those inhabitants who turned to wickedness (Leviticus 18:28), and the fields would lie desolate in their absence (Jeremiah 18:15-17).

Meanwhile, the Jewish people were also told they would be scattered among the nations and would never find a place to rest their feet (Leviticus 26:26-39; Deuteronomy 28:64-67). The sword would follow after them, and they would bear the reproach of famine while in exile (Jeremiah 14; Ezekiel 5).

Still, God also promised that one day He would come and find His people, no matter how far they had been scattered, and return them to the land promised to Abraham and his descendants as an “everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8). This promise of a future restoration is spoken of by all the Hebrew prophets and is affirmed by all the great covenants of the Bible.

The Promise of Restoration

Throughout Scripture, Israel is promised a last-day restoration in the land. This promise rests on the faithful character of God, that He can be trusted to carry out His promises because He cannot lie. This is especially true if it is a covenant promise sworn to by divine oath.

In the Abrahamic Covenant we find the election of both the people and the land of Israel for the purpose of world redemption. The two would merge to become a “great nation” that over time would bless us with all the things we need for salvation (Romans 9:3-5).

In the Mosaic Covenant, the relationship between the land and people of Israel is regulated by their spiritual standing before God, in order to show forth His holy and righteous character. Yet any separation of the people from the land as a divine corrective measure would always be followed by a return to the land in God’s timing (Leviticus 26:40-45; Jeremiah 31:10).

In the Davidic Covenant, we are assured that one day the people and land of Israel will be reunited and restored beyond that which King David had built. In fact, it will be an everlasting kingdom presided over by a promised Messiah, the Son of David, who would rule from Jerusalem over all the earth in righteousness and peace.

Finally in the New Covenant, Jesus proved his Messianic credentials through his perfect obedience even while enduring a cruel death on the Cross (Philippians 2:5-11). He earned the right to sit on the throne of David forever to rule over the earth from a restored Israel. He was already equal with God, but now no one can ever challenge His right to rule as Lucifer once did (see Isaiah 14:9-17).

Now some Christians still question whether Israel is promised a restoration in our day. They contend it was either forfeited or already fulfilled in the earlier returns under Ezra and Nehemiah. Or, they say it is not vouched for in the New Testament and therefore Christians can ignore Israel today as a political accident, or as the result of a ‘man-made Zionism’ devoid of God’s hand.

Yet by the time the New Testament was written the Israelite hope
THE POPULAR JEWISH SHOUK IN JERUSALEM
In Jeremiah 32 the Lord promises: “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever... And I will make an everlasting covenant with them... and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul” (Jeremiah 32:37-42).

And in the clearest picture of this two-phase process of restoration, Ezekiel 36 declares: “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you... I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations” (Ezekiel 36:24-30).

For more than 100 years now, the world has been witnessing the physical restoration of Israel to her land with amazing accuracy. The people are returning to rebuild the waste places of Judea and to plant vineyards once again on the mountains of Samaria. The land is yielding its fruit once more, the desert is blossoming like a rose, and the people are being restored to health. Indeed, the “reproach of famine” has been removed from the Jewish people in an incredible way, and Israel has become a land of plenty. Not only does it have one of healthiest diets in the world today, but every year the nation’s farmers are somehow producing greater yields with less water.

Now consider again that even within the past century the land of Israel was still barren and that only 70 years ago Jews under Nazi occupation in Europe faced mass starvation and death. Thus the transformation of the land and people of Israel in just a few short generations is nothing short of miraculous. And if we see the promise of Israel’s physical restoration being fulfilled, with such remarkable precision, it means we can completely trust God for their spiritual restoration as well.

The Partners of Restoration
Another core feature of the promised last-days’ restoration of Israel is that it would be marked by Gentile assistance. The same Hebrew prophets who foretold of a time when God would set His hand to finally re-gather the scattered Jewish people back to their land, also foresaw that Gentiles would be involved in this restoration.

This is made especially clear by the prophet Isaiah, who repeatedly speaks of God bringing “the wealth of the Gentiles” to a restored Israel. The prophet assures, “The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you” (Isaiah 60:10). He adds that, “the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet” (Isaiah 60:14).
It is hard to find a more apt description of the modern-day phenomenon of Christians coming in humility to aid and assist a people whom our forbearers in the faith once oppressed.

Isaiah also proclaims: “Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples; They shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders; Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers; They shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me” (Isaiah 49:22-23).

This particular passage opens with an unusual Hebrew phrase that has been interpreted in various ways in modern English translations of the Bible, including that God would “beckon” or “wave” or “whistle” to the Gentiles. In other words, it is the sort of visible and audible gestures one makes to flag down a taxi. That is, God has not kept this a little secret that He only shares with a few dear saints in their prayer closets. Instead, He is out on the street corner shouting at the Gentiles to get involved in the restoration of Israel.

Thus we Christians have little excuse when we fail to answer that call in this day and age, when it is so obvious that God Himself is gathering the outcasts of Israel.

And the fact is that Gentile kings and queens have indeed contributed greatly to the Zionist cause. In 1865, for example, Britain’s Queen Victoria gave royal patronage to the founding of the Palestine Exploration Fund for the purpose of settling Jews back in their ancient homeland. The British crown later endorsed the Zionists’ national aspirations in the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

Meanwhile, such American presidents as John Adams, Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman openly supported Israel’s restoration.

Today, Gentile Christians both great and small are still partnering in the great return of the Jewish people back to their land, knowing that it eventually becomes a spiritual return to their God. Therefore the question is: What are you doing to help with Israel’s restoration?

**Conclusion**

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem offers many ways in which you can be involved in the on-going restoration of Israel. Whether it is through our Aliyah operations, our assistance to new Jewish immigrants, our various social aid projects throughout the land, our global prayer initiatives, or our many other ministry activities, you can be a part of repairing the breach, healing the historic wounds, and humbly telling the Jewish people they are home for good.

DAVID PARSONS is an attorney, journalist, and ordained minister who serves as Media Director for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife, Josepha and son, Yonathan.
AS THE MIDDLE EAST continues to be shaken by violence and political unrest, Israel has remained an island of stability, freedom, and democracy in the midst of a turbulent region. Nonetheless, Israel is quietly going through some major societal changes itself. But these will only serve to strengthen the democratic foundations of the state, while also having the potential to reshape the future of the nation and the region.

More specifically, there is a series of new laws being enacted in the Knesset that can become game changers for Israeli politics and society. These new measures address long-standing issues that Israelis have debated but failed to resolve over many decades. But due to the current make-up and priorities of the ruling coalition government, and the absence of any ultra-Orthodox parties inside the coalition, they are finally being tackled head-on.

Sharing the Burden
One major divide in Israeli society is between the ultra-Orthodox, or haredi community, and the rest of the traditional and secular Jews. Many in Israel have come to resent the fact that most young haredi men do not serve in the IDF but rather study at yeshivas with the help of government subsidies. This inequity stems back to when Israel was founded in 1948. The ultra-Orthodox community was small at the time and was seen in a positive light as the guardians of Judaism down through the centuries of exile. So David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, gave a special exemption from army service for those haredim in full-time Torah study. There were only around 600 such yeshiva students at the time and they were even granted a stipend to support themselves.

However, the ultra-Orthodox sector has been growing rapidly ever since due to their extremely high birth rates, and today they represent more than 15% of Israel’s population. Many do not work, and this places an unfair financial burden on those Israelis who work and pay taxes. In addition, the haredi exemption from mandatory army service is no longer accepted by the majority of Israeli Jews who send their children into the IDF to defend the nation.

In the last election, several parties promised to enact a law that would ensure an equal sharing of the burden of military service. This issue was a major unifying factor among those factions who joined the Likud-led coalition government, and they were finally able to deliver on those campaign promises with a new law passed in March. It will require that most haredi men serve in the army and will impose criminal penalties for evading draft orders. The provision will take several years to go into full effect, giving ultra-Orthodox leaders time to prepare their youngsters for this change. There is still strong resistance to the new measure among rabbinic leaders, but legislation is now in place to resolve this age-old issue of inequality in Israel.

‘One Rabbi for One Nation’
Agreement over the haredi draft law has created momentum inside the government to address other areas where the ultra-Orthodox community has had inordinate control over the rest of society. To start chipping away at the status quo on religious matters, the system of having two chief rabbis was targeted next.

The population of Israel today derives from two major ethnic groups – the Ashkenazi Jews from northern Europe and the Sephardic Jews from Spanish and Middle Eastern backgrounds. While on a global scale the Ashkenazi community represents more than 70% of Jews worldwide, within Israel the divide is 50/50 between the Ashkenazim and Sephardim. This is mainly due to the mass expulsion of around 800,000 Jews from the Middle East and North Africa after Israel’s victory in the 1948 War of Independence, most of whom then made their way to the newly-founded Jewish state.

For many decades the Sephardic community felt they were being discriminated against by Israel’s ruling Ashkenazi elite, especially with regards to career opportunities. Because of the cultural and minor liturgical differences,
the state of Israel decided to establish two positions for Chief Rabbi in Israel – a Sephardic one and an Ashkenazi one. But, in March of this year, the Israeli government appointed a working group to unify the two positions. “One rabbi for one people,” pledged Economics Minister Naftali Bennett of the Jewish Home party. The hope is that such changes will slowly sap away at the inequitable powers enjoyed by the ultra-Orthodox.

Ending Small Party Politics
Another challenge for Israeli democracy has been the fragmentation of power caused by too many small parties within the Knesset. At times the electoral system has given disproportionate influence to specialty parties that only represent certain narrow constituencies or interests. The large parties are left beholden to the few to get anything done. But a new law has now raised from 2% to 3.25% the minimum threshold required in future elections to make it into the Knesset. This will force the smaller factions to either merge with larger parties or risk being shut out of parliament completely. Meanwhile, the ruling coalition will hopefully be better able to govern.

Arab Christians Receive Their Due
Another big change will impact the Israeli Arab sector thanks to a new law which recognizes Arab Christians as a separate community from the Arab Muslim majority. Until now, all Arab citizens in Israel were under one law which applied to both Muslims and Christians, but the larger Muslim population found ways to sideline the Christians. The new law now allows, for example, Arab Christian schools to develop their own curriculum, different from Muslim schools in Israel. In the long run, this law will hopefully expand the opportunities for the Arab Christian population to integrate better into Israeli society. At the same time, a new initiative has been launched within the Arab Orthodox and Armenian communities to encourage their young men to join the Israeli army in a very similar way to the historic Druze participation in the IDF.

Vote for Peace
A final major piece of legislation passed recently is the referendum law, which requires that any future peace agreement which concedes land in Israel, eastern Jerusalem, or the Golan Heights must be put to a public vote. The law only applies to lands now claimed as sovereign Israeli territory, but not the West Bank. Nonetheless, it would likely force any peace deal with the Palestinians to be approved in a national referendum, as it would likely involve the status of eastern Jerusalem and perhaps land swaps of Israeli territory. This now means an Israeli government must have the support of a majority of the nation for any deals it may reach with the Palestinians behind closed doors.

All these new bills making their way through the Knesset reflect a rare consensus among the majority of Israeli parliament members to finally resolve some of the persistent questions facing the nation for decades. Their passage will bring many positive changes to Israel, but it also means much of the common glue holding the government together is dissipating, and differences over the peace process could now start to test the coalition bonds.
Meet New Resident Yelena

Yelena is one of the newest residents at the Haifa Home. Born in Minsk, she was four years old at the outbreak of World War II. Her childhood memories in Nazi-occupied Belarus are of constant fear and of wandering from place to place with her parents. But Yelena’s latter years are turning out very different now that she lives at the Haifa Home.

“Here I live in a community. I can sleep soundly, and there are people who care about me,” Yelena says. “I have a happy home, food and company. I thank God that I’m here.”

Surprise Visit by Maronite Christian Neighbors

On a recent Sunday afternoon, a troop of young scouts from a local Maronite Church turned up with their drums and bagpipes for a visit at the Haifa Home. It was a pleasant surprise for the residents that these Lebanese Christian youth now living in Israel wanted to give of their time and talent to entertain elderly Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Yet, such surprise visits have become a common occurrence at the Haifa Home, as the story of this unusual facility has gone out far and wide.

Christian Volunteers Serving at the Haifa Home

A short time ago, the ICEJ brought in a Christian nurse from Finland to volunteer her time and skills at the Haifa Home for a few months. Tarja is one of four Christians from abroad now working at the home to help meet the daily needs of the residents.

“I take the residents’ blood pressure, treat their skin problems and care for them when they have pain somewhere,” said Tarja. “Every day I have office hours and also do a lot of home visits. I help elderly survivors to take their medicine and accompany them to the hospital if needed. I enjoy the work very much, and the residents appreciate it, too. They share their worries and joys with me, and they need a lot of encouragement.”

Esti, a resident of the Home who also worked for years as a nurse at the nearby Rambam Hospital, says she is very pleased to have Tarja helping to share the nursing duties. “Before Tarja, everybody came to me! It is very good to have another nurse,” smiled Esti.

Inspired by a Dream

Recently, the ICEJ received a generous donation of €30,000 for our work with Holocaust survivors from an 85 year-old Christian lady in Germany. She told our office in Stuttgart that God recently spoke to her in a dream that she would not live much longer and should give some of her money to help Holocaust survivors in Israel. When she woke up the next morning, she came across a promotional in the program booklet of a Christian TV Channel that talked about the Christian Embassy’s outreach to needy Holocaust survivors.

“I had never heard of the ICEJ before, but the photos of residents at the Haifa Home touched me so much that I knew immediately that this was the place where God wanted the money to go,” she explained.
THE ONGOING REVOLUTION in Ukraine has caused great concern for the Jewish people living there. Both pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian elements are blaming Jews for provoking the current crisis and neo-Nazi forces are taking advantage of the chaos to make their presence felt in the streets. Thus, many Jews are thinking about moving to Israel and some have already begun making their preparations to leave. The Jewish Agency reported in early March that the number of Jews making aliyah from Ukraine has already doubled in 2014.

There is also constant contact between Israeli officials and the Ukrainian Jewish community to monitor their status.

The Jewish Agency for Israel has also approached the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem with an official and urgent request for assistance in bringing Ukrainian Jews to safety in Israel. There is a special need at present for funding to cover extra aliyah flights plus transport and logistics for poorer Jewish families in Ukraine who cannot afford the travel costs at present.

Some were courageously evacuated by Christians from conflict zones while others made the decision to move to Israel under quieter conditions. But this unexpected crisis in Ukraine now demands that we act once again to bring needy and endangered Jews home from this troubled region.

Please help us by making your most generous contribution today for the urgent aliyah of Jews from Ukraine. You can donate on-line at:

http://us.icej.org/ukraine

Haifa Home Expansion Needed

More than 70 very deserving Holocaust survivors have now found a loving home in our Haifa assisted-living facility. We are working constantly to expand the home because of the long list of survivors still waiting for a place to live. The Haifa Home has grown into an entire community of apartments and care facilities that take up nearly an entire city block. Currently, there are renovations underway in several more apartment buildings but we need your help to finish the work so more new residents can move in.

In addition, the community dining hall is presently doubling as an all-purpose room for recreational programs, educational workshops, art classes and other activities. But as the number of residents grows, a more suitable place will be required for these communal activities. The overall cost of a new activities hall will be $US150,000, including an elevator.

Please give today to support the ICEJ’s work with needy Holocaust Survivors. Donate on-line by visiting: www.icejusa.org/expanding-haifa-home
FOR MANY YEARS NOW, Israelis have been seeing an ICEJ van traveling around the greater Tel Aviv area with a sign in Hebrew saying “Israel you are not alone.” While most of the time it is delivering grocery supplies to a local food bank, sometimes it can be spotted in the Karmiel region in northern Israel, where the Christian Embassy is involved in another kind of distribution project for the poor.

A clothing bank has been operating in Karmiel for a long while, but it had become unsightly. Those needy local residents who would come to the used clothing shop for help often felt ashamed to be there due to its run-down condition. Finally, a decision was made to refurbish the bank and to give it a complete makeover more welcoming of its visitors.

With support from the Christian Embassy, the clothing bank now looks nothing like the gloomy place it once was. The new clothes racks and the brightened surroundings have transformed the distribution center into a stylish thrift store serving the poorest members of society. The clientele can now shop with dignity, and find quality second-hand clothing at little or no cost.

The re-opening of the thrift store was amazing! Professional Israeli models agreed to volunteer their time and together with skilled stylists presented an entertaining fashion show for the local community using clothes available at the center.

“We stand today in this beautiful place in great part thanks to the work of the ICEJ,” said Nissim Tzioni, chairman of Pitchon Lev, the Israeli charity which runs the clothing bank. “We’ve been partnering for years with the Christian Embassy and we are blessed that we can work together for those in need in this land.”

The store opening and fashion show were also attended by Karmiel city officials and was covered by the local Hebrew press. Rina Greenberg, deputy mayor of Karmiel, told the gathering about her first encounters with Christian supporters of Israel while travelling abroad.

“When I visited Norway, I was a little nervous hearing about the protests against Israel in the Western world. I did not know what to expect,” she recalled. “What a blessing it was to see Christians outside our events with the message ‘Israel you are not alone’ written on their banners.”

IN RECENT DECADES, the ICEJ has assisted more than 115,000 Jews from around the world in making aliyah to Israel. But many newcomers find starting life over in the Promised Land to be very difficult. Therefore the Christian Embassy has been working with the Jewish Agency for many years to sponsor programs that help new immigrants adjust to their new country and culture.

Recently an ICEJ AID team visited an absorption center in Beersheva, where some 442 immigrants currently are receiving help to get settled in Israel. They represent 30 different countries of origin and speak 17 foreign languages. About one third hail from the former Soviet Union, while the second largest group has come by ‘quiet aliyah’ from Yemen.

The Yemenite Jews have faced particularly steep challenges upon arriving in Israel. Most still need to learn Hebrew, yet some of the Yemenite women have never even held a pencil in their hands, and their children have never been to school. Thus it has been necessary to open a separate language course for the Yemenite women.

One of these Yemenite women, Lauza, lost her husband and was left alone with nine children. She decided to send five of the children to Israel to live with her sister. Four years later, she has now arrived with the remaining four children and reunited her family. An ICEJ AID team recently met with Lauza at the Beersheva absorption center and realized we had already helped her five children who had arrived earlier in Israel. It created a very special bond for everyone involved.

We also have assisted Malesa from Ethiopia in getting the education he needed. Thanks to an ICEJ scholarship, he was able to get a certificate in electrical wiring and today he works at a factory for the popular Israeli brand Maimon’s. He is very hard working and his supervisors are especially impressed with his knowledge of Hebrew, which he learned at a Beersheva absorption center. Vocational programs like this, supported by the ICEJ, are essential for helping new immigrants integrate into the society.

Please support the work of the ICEJ to assist new Jewish immigrants in Israel. Donate on-line today at http://us.icej.org/aid

THE BIBLICAL FEAST of Passover begins this year on the evening of April 14. For Jewish families in Israel, this sacred holiday is a very special occasion. Yet, it can also be a difficult season for those lacking the means to celebrate Passover according to custom.

So, ICEJ AID has been busy preparing to assist hundreds of needy families in Israel this Passover. We will be providing traditional Passover baskets to poor families, needy new immigrants, single-parent homes, the elderly, and especially Holocaust survivors.

Recent government figures indicate that more than one-third of Israelis are living below the poverty line. Many come from large families with numerous children, meaning extra mouths to feed. Thus we look to you to help us provide basic food staples and traditional Passover fare to hundreds of impoverished Jewish families this holiday season.
IN MARCH, the city of Jerusalem hosted its fourth annual Jerusalem Marathon with some 20,000 local and foreign participants enjoying the unique views of the capital city while straining for the finishing line. Each year, hundreds of Israeli charities and other organizations encourage their workers to participate in one of the marathon’s six different distances. Along the various courses, everyone from politicians, musicians, celebrities, soldiers and tourists can be seen. This year, three staff members from the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem tightened up their shoe laces and took to the streets of the City of the Great King, representing the ministry in the Jerusalem Marathon. ICEJ staffers Scott Morgan, Esther Wieja and Jani Salokangas all were taking part in the marathon for the second year in a row, this year taking on the 10 km course. Jerusalem is known for being one of the toughest marathons in the world due to its many hills, and if you have not participated yet, we encourage you to start training and join us for next year’s Jerusalem Marathon.

The winner of Israman 2014, Petr Vabrousek from the Czech Republic, is a legend with more than 130 Ironman competitions under his belt. But the Israeli contest was not easy for him. “This is the hardest Ironman I have ever done, bar none. It was brutal,” he said at the end.

After he crossed the finish line, Jani spoke of the thrill he got from participating. “I witnessed amazing sceneries, courageous people, and some pain,” he explained. “In sum, it was an amazing experience!” And Jani has already started training for the 2015 edition of Israman.
‘HURT BUT NOT FORGOTTEN’

AN ARISE TESTIMONIAL FROM A 15 YEAR OLD GIRL IN EUROPE

I HAVE FELT over the past years that I don’t belong to the church; in fact I did not know if they wanted me there. I’ve felt scared, isolated, alone and hurt. I know that in the Body of Christ we all have a role and a calling to fulfil. Many times I’ve thought as if I have been forgotten in the cracks of other’s calling. The Body of Christ is one and in that body I have felt like a hurting toe, invisible, isolated and hidden. My agony started when I was raped a few years ago. Since then I have felt darkness and heaviness in my heart, which I have been incapable to share with anybody.

“TODAY, I HEARD A MESSAGE ABOUT ISRAEL AND THAT GOD HAS ALWAYS HAD A CALLING FOR THIS NATION.

Today, I heard a message [at an ICE] ARISE meeting about Israel and that God has always had a calling for this nation. His faithfulness over this defying nation has never been tied to their acts, hardness or their short-sightedness. God stayed faithful and still is because that is His plan. God’s message has spoken like a loudspeaker from Israel to the world.

Tonight, I understood that God’s faithfulness towards His people has been unshakable and that they also play an important role even in my life as a Christian. Tonight, I understood that if God has been faithful towards them in their biggest wounds and catastrophes, I know that He will be faithful to me in my short span of life. Tonight, I regain joy and faith into my life because I know that He has a calling for me just like He has for the Jews. Now I can see the light once more because I’ve seen His grace and healing power in my life. I was hurt but never forgotten by God. From now on, I want to be the best possible “toe” in the Body of Christ because it gives balance to the whole body.

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11-13). ☕
SHE CAN BE TRUSTED with exquisite gifts because she knows their value, shares them with others, and then gives them back to God. And, she isn't scared.

This is how it was with the infants Cyndee Taylor and her husband, Pete, nurtured and loved as foster parents, only to love them and to release them back to God and His care. There were six of these babies. Six times, loving fully and deeply, then releasing. Costly love.

And this is how it was when Cyndee and Pete sold their big, 19 year-old Georgian house (Pete built it) and pool, all of their furnishings and cars, her high-end gift shop, and then placed their miniature Dachshunds, Toby and Red, with their new family. At the height of blessing and vitality, the call to serve Israel on this genteel fifty-something Southern lady, settled deep in her bones, remaining there patiently for years—was it two? Or, three?—until one day Pete came home from work with the words she yearned to hear: “I feel called to go to Israel to work for ICEJ.” Before she knew it, a life-time of belongings was reduced to a few heirlooms in a storage unit and six suitcases of clothes. This is the cost of such a call.

In 2004, Cyndee was at her computer googling “Israel” when up came ICEJ. By fall, 2005, she took part in the Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem, returning once with their daughter Grace, and at least five times with Pete. Cyndee and Pete’s support of ICEJ continued to grow in a variety of ways, including hosting ICEJ speakers at their church in Port Charlotte, Florida. By the time Pete was gripped with the call, their relationship with Israel and ICEJ was well-established. They submitted applications for employment with ICEJ and were offered positions, Cyndee with Reception, Pete as General Manager.

I sat with Cyndee in the elegant reception area of the Christian Embassy, watching her monitor four security screens, buzz-in and welcome guests, answer and connect calls, and graciously respond to Embassy personnel as they stopped by to acknowledge her behind the bouquet of flowers on her desk. Between interactions, I said to her, “didn’t it just rip your heart out to sell all of your possessions?” She looked at me with her steady blue eyes, searched her mind, and said, simply, “no.” She added, “I was ready. I had been praying for years.”

Cyndee is at her post Monday through Thursdays, 9:00 to 4:30, and Fridays till 1:00. She attends prayer meetings at the Embassy with Pete three days a week at 8:00 am, and Wednesdays at 4:00 pm—this is church for them. Cyndee says she and Pete are always together. When not at the Embassy, they love to walk the streets of Jerusalem and the Old City, dine at their favorite restaurants in the German Colony and Ein Kerem (the town of Elizabeth, Zachariah, and John the Baptist), and visit other special places in Israel.

Cyndee’s shop, Pomegranate and Fig, was voted #1 gift shop in Charlotte County, Florida. Now, in the land of pomegranates and figs, Cyndee Taylor is often the first and last person Embassy guests see. Most likely, they have no idea what she sacrificed in order to serve them. But, with God’s help and Pete’s support, she puts her heart into it, knowing their commitment will draw to a close at the end of the year. Then, all this will be given back to God, and somewhere in America—not sure where—they will begin all over again. Cyndee can be trusted with exquisite gifts—receiving, serving, caring—and then giving back again. That’s just how she is. 😊
The US Branch of the ICEJ recently had a number of special opportunities to get the message out to pastors, Christian media, and universities, while building historic relations with the Jewish community and Israeli leaders.

**CALIFORNIA**

Rev. Juha Ketola, ICEJ International Director, visited the USA in February and had wonderful meetings in several churches in Los Angeles, California including North Hollywood Foursquare Church, Iglesia El Calvario, Church of the Living Christ, and The Well in San Diego. Juha also spoke at a Pastors lunch hosted by Rev. Kevyn Jones of Valley Park Baptist Church. His ministry was well received and relationships were established with new churches and pastors.

**VIRGINIA AND FLORIDA**

A very special Pastors and Leadership Luncheon, attended by some 68 pastors and leaders, was sponsored by Love of Israel founder, Ruth Sims, the ICEJ, TMCJ, and others at the Founders Inn in Virginia Beach, Virginia on February 6. Dr. Michael Little, President and COO of CBN and Susan Michael, ICEJ USA Director, spoke about “Israel, The Land and People of the Bible: Current Events with a Christian Biblical Understanding and Response.” Susan also spoke at Hollywood Faith Christian Center in Hollywood, Florida on January 19.

**REGENT UNIVERSITY**

The ICEJ is always grateful for the opportunity to speak to students and young adults, so the invitation for Susan Michael to speak at the Regent University Chapel service on February 5 was greatly appreciated. The chapel audience of some 500 people included students and faculty, as well as staff of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). Susan was then Guest Lecturer for the International Relations Class of Dr. David Meyer as well as the Christian Worldview class of Dr. Bobby Hill.

**FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY**

The ICEJ co-hosted an event with several organizations to hear Holocaust Survivor Irwin Roth at the FAU campus in Boca Raton, Florida. Susan provided closing remarks applying the lessons learned from the Holocaust to today.

**JEWS AND CHRISTIANS WORKING TOGETHER**

A unique panel entitled “Faith to Faith, Christians and Jews Working Together for Israel” was sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Sarasota, Florida and hosted by Church of Hope, on Feb. 18. Panelists serving with Susan included Chaim Shacham, Consul General of Miami, and Rev. Robert Stearns of Eagles’ Wings Ministries.

Rev. Malcolm Hedding, former ICEJ Director, and Susan Michael participated in panel discussions called “Friends of Faith” at the AIPAC Policy Conference attended by some 14,000 Israel activists. Also attending the AIPAC Conference on behalf of the ICEJ were Daryl Hedding, ICEJ Strategic Development Director and Albert Thompson, Washington, DC Liaison and Marketing Manager.

**AMBASSADOR RON DERMER**

The US Branch of the ICEJ is introducing Israel’s new Ambassador to the US to American Christian leaders. Earl Cox, of Israel Always, and Susan Michael accompanied the Ambassador to the annual National Religious Broadcasters conference in Nashville, TN for a number of meetings with media leaders. While there the Ambassador addressed a lunch of some 100 pastors and leaders at World Outreach Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee on February 24.

For more details on upcoming ICEJ events, or to request a speaker in your area call: (615) 895-9830  
WWW.ICEJUSA.ORG/EVENTS
ICEJ-GERMANY HOSTS HANDS-ON TOUR OF AID PROJECTS IN ISRAEL
BY BIRTE SCHOLZ

In February, the German Branch of the ICEJ sponsored a special tour for its Christian supporters to visit ICEJ-AID projects in Israel and meet our local charitable partners. The tour group included 25 German Christian donors who each day of the tour had the opportunity to see first-hand several of our humanitarian projects. ICEJ AID director Nicole Yoder and her long-time colleague Yudit Setz set up the tour schedule and accompanied the group for much of the journey.

Besides visiting a number of social aid projects along with traditional Bible sites, the group also received special briefings from staff at the ICEJ’s headquarters in Jerusalem, including from our Executive Director, Dr. Jürgen Bühler.

“The Christian Embassy seeks to reach all sectors of Israeli society,” Bühler told the group. “It is important that we not only walk in the footsteps of Jesus, but also find ways to help modern Israel in practical ways.”

That same goal was motivating the German visitors.

“I was interested in this tour because of the personal encounters it provided. I want to bring God’s love to Israel,” explained Rose Hinderer.

“We did not come as onlookers, but we wanted to be a part of Israel’s story today, to meet the local people, talk to them, and engage with them directly,” added Hans-Peter Schulze, who came with his wife Brigitte.

And there were a lot of opportunities to do so. In the city of Rishon LeZion, the group joined a hands-on project distributing food items to needy Israelis.

“This was very touching for me. I gave the food directly to people and I tried to say something nice to everyone,” said Waltraud Graf-Rieber.

Another moving moment was when the group prayed for Israel and the Gaza Strip on a lookout next to Sderot, a small town in southern Israel which is regularly targeted by Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza.

“The message of ICEJ spokesman Doron Schneider that prayer accomplishes much here in Israel inspires me to pray more at home,” said Anette Walch. “I am now more motivated to do that!”

The group also visited a Palestinian church in Bethlehem, a Messianic Jewish kindergarten in Jerusalem, and a home for youth from broken families in the North, while also planting trees in a new forest in the middle of the country. But for most, the highlight of the tour was a visit to the ICEJ’s unique Home for Holocaust survivors in Haifa, where they heard personal stories of suffering and survival from some of the residents.

“It was a very impressive tour. So many things were impacting,” stated Brigitte Huber.

“It was a privilege for me to visit all these projects and to see that love is behind everything the ICEJ does,” noted Esther Jesse.

“We have been in Israel before but this tour had the highest value for us. We are no longer just donors but friends, co-workers, and ambassadors for Israel and the ICEJ,” concluded Brigitte Schulze.

If you are interested in joining a hands-on tour of ICEJ AID projects in 2015, please write us at icejusa@icejusa.org

ITALY
ICEJ ITALY UPDATE

ICEJ MUSIC and Creative Director Ray Ramirez had the opportunity to minister in three churches in Rome, Italy in March with his host, ICEJ-Italy National Director Rev. Tony Rozzini. One of the meetings was a youth service with more than 50 young people gathered to worship and hear an encouraging message from the Word of God. The visit opened new doors for the ICEJ to connect with churches in Rome.
BRAZILIAN CITY LAUNCHES ANNUAL TABERNACLES CELEBRATION

LAST SUMMER, a group of Brazilian pastors led by Bishop Marcos Oliveira of the ICEJ-Brazil Branch successfully petitioned the city of Bertioga, in the state of São Paulo, to declare that the city would observe the biblical Feast of Tabernacles during the second weekend of October of every year as part of its cultural calendar. Then in October 2013, Pastor Jonatas Melo, the Administrative Director for ICEJ-Brazil, came to Bertioga to help launch the resort city’s first official Sukkot celebration. Together with the mayor and other local authorities, as well as area pastors, they decreed that the celebration marked a return to biblical principles in their city. The ICEJ-Brazil team, under National Director Apostle René Terra Nova, continues to develop the work and vision of the Christian Embassy in their country based on the scriptural mandate of Isaiah 62:1: “For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns.”

ICEJ-INDIA HOSTS SPEAKING TOUR

IN FEBRUARY, the ICEJ branch in India hosted our Media Director, David Parsons, for a 10-day speaking tour in the major cities of Delhi, Calcutta and Mumbai, as well as Orissa and Vijaywada, the hometown of ICEJ-India National Director, Meka Padma Rao, also known as “Pastor Dany.” In a series of special meetings for local ministry leaders, hundreds of Indian pastors were given solid biblical teaching on why Christians should be standing with Israel today, a message which was very well received. David also was invited to minister in several church services, including at Pastor Dany’s home congregation of nearly 1,000 believers.

The growing Evangelical body in India today is made up of many humble believers from various religious backgrounds, who are all hungry for revival in their country and know that blessing Israel is a key part of the move of God in our day.

The ICEJ-India Branch has existed for some time now, but since Pastor Dany took over as National Director three years ago, he has brought a fresh vision to expand the work to reach the entire country. The world’s largest democracy, India is a vast nation of 1.2 billion people spread out among 28 states, each speaking different Hindi languages. His goal is to establish regional directors to oversee the local work in every state, and thanks to David’s recent visit along with prior visits by ICEJ International Director, Rev. Juha Ketola, the ICEJ-India Branch is now half-way to that goal with representatives appointed in 14 states. As a result, the India office has been able to increase its regular contributions to the work of the ICEJ in Israel, including donations to help with the return of the Bnei Menashe community from northeast India. They are also planning to bring a large group of Indian pilgrims to the Feast of Tabernacles this coming October.
SIXTY YEARS AGO, when Yad Vashem was first established, the enormity of the Holocaust was still being uncovered. But Jews in Israel, many of whom had lost entire families to the Nazi genocide, quickly realized that something had to be done to preserve the memory of the six million fellow Jews who had perished in the Shoah. Honouring their lives and heroism also helped to reinforce a major reason why the modern state of Israel was founded - to serve as a safe haven for endangered Jews wherever they may be. And after all, there were already people denying that this colossal crime had ever happened.

This year, Yad Vashem is marking sixty years since its founding in 1953 by a special act of the Israeli Knesset. The resulting memorial and museum established in west Jerusalem has since grown into a dynamic global center for documenting the Holocaust, remembering the heroes and martyrs of this tragic period, and educating future generations on the evils of racism and anti-Semitism.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has a special interest in helping Yad Vashem mark the first six decades of its commendable work. Since the year 2006, the ICEJ has been Yad Vashem's official partner in taking the universal lessons of the Holocaust into the Christian world. Creating the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem...
department was a historic decision for the museum, and one which aims to help secure its future as well.

“The name Yad Vashem means ‘a memorial and a name’ and it comes from Isaiah 56,” explains Dr. Susanna Kokkonen, Director of the Christian Desk at Yad Vashem. “This is the chapter in Isaiah where the Lord says His House is a house of prayer for all peoples. Today, Yad Vashem has a million visitors each year from all over the world, and our research and educational programs are having a global impact on how this period is viewed and taught worldwide.”

Dr. Kokkonen adds that “Christians should have a special concern for sustaining the on-going work of Yad Vashem because Hitler would have never succeeded in killing so many Jews if not for the centuries of Christian anti-Semitic teachings against the Jewish people. This is indeed a dark stain on Church history which we must do something about.”

In gratitude to those who did resist the Nazi agenda, Yad Vashem started a special program in 1962 to honour Righteous Gentiles who acted nobly in risking their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. This year also marks 50 years since the launch of the Righteous Among the Nations program at Yad Vashem, and a special exhibition currently open at the museum pays tribute to their legacy.

There are at present 24,811 Righteous Gentiles recognized by Yad Vashem, and more are being added every year. As the exhibition shows, they come from all walks of life, religious backgrounds, and professions. Some were doctors, clergy, and diplomats, while others were house servants and peasant farmers. The common denominator among them, however, was that they all believed Jews were humans deserving of equal treatment and they were willing to pay a heavy price for this conviction.

The exhibition consists of a series of short documentaries that visitors can view, each telling the story of how Righteous Gentiles in different countries across Europe risked their lives to hide and rescue Jews from Nazi capture.

In one film, the story is told of Dimitar Peshev, a prominent member of parliament in Bulgaria, who, at first was a leading collaborator with the German occupation of his country. But when he learned that 48,000 Jews were to be rounded up in the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia and deported to the death camps, he decided to join the opposition. Peshev used his position as speaker of parliament to persuade other lawmakers to sign an urgent petition against the deportation orders. Amazingly, in one day’s time he managed to save all 48,000 Jews from extermination. In 1973, Peshev was recognised by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Gentile.

Another short documentary is narrated by a Dutch farmer who suddenly found out in recent years that his mother and grandparents were being considered for designation as Righteous Gentiles. Curious as to what they might have done, he began investigating the matter himself and uncovered an incredible truth about his own family.

As Yad Vashem marks its 60th Anniversary this year, we urge you to consider a special one-time gift to support the work of this revered institution. Please make your best donation online today by visiting: http://us.icej.org/yadvashem
A DISTURBING STUDY GUIDE entitled “Zionism Unsettled” has been published by an arm of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) The publication is filled with distorted facts and a historical narrative so extreme that some Jewish groups are calling it “hate speech.” It vilifies Israel and Zionism while ignoring Palestinian terrorism, calls for the annihilation of the Jewish State, and absconds Arab leaders of their culpability in the plight of the Palestinian people. The study guide proves that the PCUSA has aligned itself with the most radical of positions by equating Zionism with racism, comparing it to centuries of Christian anti-Semitism, and calling for a rethinking of the Holocaust to include the plight of the Palestinians.

The Chapter on “Evangelicals and Christian Zionism” skews the facts to portray Christians who support Israel as dangerous and a threat to Middle-East peace. The chapter is taken largely from the writings of Dr. Gary Burge, an evangelical Presbyterian and Professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, who admits to holding a form of Replacement Theology in spite of the fact that it was the root of centuries of Christian anti-Semitism.

Replacement Theology teaches that God abandoned the Jewish people, has broken His promises to them, and has chosen a new people, the Church. The danger with this theology is that it implies that the Jewish people have been rejected and discarded due to their sin and failures. It is fertile ground for the proliferation of anti-Semitism and should be guarded against.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 11 that God is not finished with the Jewish people and that their calling is irrevocable. In Hebrews 6, he cites God’s faithfulness to the Abrahamic Covenant to encourage beleaguered Christians to keep their faith, knowing they serve a faithful God.

Nevertheless, Burge goes so far as to say that the New Testament teaching spiritualizes and universalizes the Old Testament land promises to the Jewish people by treating them as spiritual metaphor. While it is true that in Galatians 3:29 the Apostle Paul said that Christians do enjoy the blessings of Abraham as spiritual heirs, he did not claim that they “replaced” the natural heirs nor inherit the land. This would require a rewriting of scripture since the land promise to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was “everlasting” and is confirmed forty-six times throughout the books of the Old Testament.

Psalm 105 says that God does not break covenant, nor alter the word that has gone out of His mouth, therefore, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would receive the promises made to them. It is because of these scriptures that the disciples asked Jesus if He was going to “restore the kingdom to Israel now” in Acts 1:6. He simply said the time was not for them to know, clearly indicating that it would happen in God’s timing. In Luke 21, Jesus said that Jerusalem would once again be under Jewish sovereignty and put it in an eschatological context.

Burge attempts then to diminish the reach of Christian Zionism by limiting it as dispensational and dual covenant in theology. While dispensationalism is a theology favorable towards Israel, only one in every ten Christians is a dispensationalist. A much larger number of Christians, from a wide-variety of denominations and theological persuasions, supported the restoration of the Jews to their homeland; including John and Charles Wesley, Robert Murray MacCheyne, Bishop Ryle of Liverpool, Charles Spurgeon, the Puritans, Professor Jacob Janeway of the Scottish National Church, Martin Luther King and many others.
Christian Zionism is also not “dual covenant.” Mainstream Christian Zionists are found in all the historical and contemporary church movements, including the Presbyterian Church, and they most certainly believe that Jesus’ finished work on the cross is their only grounds of salvation. While the basis for Christian Zionism is found in the Abrahamic Covenant, in which God announced to Abraham His plan to create a people through whom He would carry out His plan to redeem the world, the Abrahamic covenant needed the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant to bring about that great salvation.

Israel’s role, as the vehicle of God’s redemptive plan, does not make her better than any other people groups but rather more accountable to God. The Jewish people are chosen for the blessing of the nations, including the Palestinian people. However, this study construes the chosenness of the Jewish people to be a form of racism that esteems them higher than other peoples, and therefore, not held to the same standard of accountability.

The PCUSA may wish that Christians that support Israel and the Jewish people are a fringe group, but the fact is that some 70% of Americans are favorable towards Israel. There are a number of reasons why Americans support Israel: personal experience while touring Israel, admiration for Israeli technology and innovation, or appreciation for the only democracy in the Middle East. Bible-believing Christians support Israel because of their reading of the scriptures. In short, God has brought the Jewish people back to their homeland in fulfillment of His promises to Abraham and millions of Christians want to bless and help them.

Conversely, the PCUSA has aligned itself with extreme and radical groups such as Sabeel. Founded by Naim Ateek, Sabeel propagates Palestinian Liberation Theology that disregards any portion of scripture that disagrees with Ateek’s anti-Semitic views. Hence, right out of the Sabeel playbook, this study guide calls for churches to stop using hymns and liturgy that use the biblical terms: exodus, covenant, return, blossoming of the desert, Zion and Israel.

It is time that the PCUSA wakes up and realizes that holding radical and anti-Semitic positions, such as reflected in this study guide, will only guarantee their continued membership decline, because most Americans not only shun hate speech, but admire and stand with the people of Israel.

Susan Michael is US Director for International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.
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