THIRSTING FOR ZION

EMERGING NATIONS FLOCK TO THE FEAST

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.” Psalm 118:26
The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ)

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was founded in 1980 as an act of comfort and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people in their claim to Jerusalem.

Today, the Christian Embassy stands at the forefront of a growing mainstream movement of Christians worldwide who share a love and concern for Israel and an understanding of the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of Jews to the land of their forefathers.

From our headquarters in Jerusalem and through our branches and representatives in over 80 nations, we seek to challenge the Church to take up its scriptural responsibilities towards the Jewish people, to remind Israel of the wonderful promises made to her in the Bible, and to be a source of practical assistance to all the people of the Land of Israel.

The ICEJ is a non-denominational faith ministry, supported by the voluntary contributions of our members and friends worldwide. We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide.

If you wish to make a donation to the general work of the ICEJ or to a specific project described in this magazine, please use the attached response envelope, use the address below or visit our secure Web site at www.icej.org/donate.php to send your gift. All donations are tax deductible according to the law of your country.
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ICEJ & Knesset Allies Caucus

Women’s Summit Tour

13th – 22nd May 2007

Land Price USD 1144* includes 2 day registration fee to Summit

Highlights Include:

- 10 day tour including a 2 day Christian Allies Caucus Women’s Summit focusing on the hardships facing women worldwide and the solutions that can be found by the application of Judeo-Christian values. The conference will focus on lobbying governments to end:
  - Abuse of women
  - Female genital mutilation
  - Trafficking of women
  - Incest
  - Honour killing

- Visit shared Biblical sites common to Jews and Christians throughout the land of Israel.

- Dialogue with women from all backgrounds and walks of life, from Knesset members to victims of terror.

- Discuss the ideas that govern radical Islam, take a closer look at Europe’s response to women in a post Holocaust society and examine the Biblical values that tie Israel to the west.

Join Christian and Jewish women from all walks of life in Jerusalem, the city of God, to become empowered by the application of Biblical values to educate and influence your nation on issues critical to women globally. Travel throughout the land of Israel and discover how Jewish and Christian women can unite to impact the present and future generations.

*Subject to change based on minimum 35 persons
Dear Friends,

Now that the recent war in Lebanon is past, we’ve begun to see Israel’s tourist industry experience a rebound - not least thanks to the thousands of Christians who flocked to Jerusalem for the ICEJ’s annual Feast of Tabernacles Celebration, an event featured prominently in the pages of this magazine.

Nevertheless, the region is so volatile that one can never really be confident or sure about “tomorrow”. Even as the rogue North Korean regime successfully detonated its first atomic device - Iran, through a process of deception, manipulation and flagrant rejection of United Nations Resolutions continues to move steadily forward toward achieving its ultimate goal of obtaining nuclear weapons. Once again, both nations have laid bare the West’s inability to act decisively and its preference for appeasement.

In the frontline of this menace is Israel. The President of Iran has already made his intentions clear, just as Hitler did, and yet the world chooses to give him the benefit of the doubt!

As Christians we can perceive these events in one of two ways:

1. We can get desperate and seek by all manner of means to confront the problem in word and letter; or
2. We can pray with confidence because we have the sure testimony of scripture to stand upon.

While we should do all that we can to address the threats facing Israel, we should at the same time not neglect scripture and the place of prayer in this struggle.

The book of Daniel records the lives of those Jew-hating despots who were determined to liquidate Israel. They are pictured as small men whose words of arrogance rose up to heaven. They were even emboldened to blaspheme against the God of Heaven.

‘He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law, and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. ‘But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’ Daniel 7:25-27

Little do they know that the God of Israel, who gives them breath, allows them to rant and rave for through this His purpose, and not theirs, will ultimately be fulfilled and then He will remove them and they will become the chaff that the wind blows away! (Daniel 2:35)

Today we hear these voices in the persons of Nasrallah of Lebanon, Ahmadinejad of Iran, and Bin Laden of Afghanistan. They will do nothing more than advance the victory of Jesus in the end and then they will be blown away! Their words are loud and filled with arrogance but the words of scripture will prevail and not theirs. Daniel, speaking of Israel’s future destiny, says:

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.” Daniel 12:1

So, while we watch, as Jesus taught us, we also pray as He exhorted us. When we lose our confidence in prayer it is then that we lose our confidence in the scripture and the God of it. His word will never fail and thus those who pray according to it will see its triumph. Given this reality the biblical call to pray for the peace of Jerusalem takes on renewed urgency and power!

Yours in Jesus,

Malcolm Hedding
The Great Hosanna!

Feast of Tabernacles 2006
Emerging nations flock to the Feast

By Michael Hines and Jake King

From Angola to Brazil, China to Zimbabwe - there is revival across the world: The church is catching a vision for God’s Word and His World. More and more are beginning to pray for Israel. And now they’re coming to the Feast...

It marked a sudden end to a thirsty summer. The tourism drought brought on by the month-long Lebanon war was, in a moment, washed away as a flood of believers from every corner of the globe ascended the sunburnt hilltop highway to Jerusalem for the 27th annual Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Billed by Israeli media and government officials as the largest tourist event of 2006, this year’s Feast - The Great H osan na - drew over five thousand pilgrims from 84 nations, defying local post-war pessimism and sending a powerful message of solidarity to Israelis in every walk of life.

‘A very difficult year’

The final attendance, which steadily climbed by several hundred each day in the weeks preceding the October 7th Dead Sea start, outstripped even the most enthusiastic predictions of organizers at the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. According to Israeli Tourism Minister Isaac Herzog, it represented a “major recovery” in the fortunes of the nation’s beleaguered tourism sector following the bruising month-long border conflict with Hizb’Allah.

“Since 1980, God has used this ministry to revive the ancient Biblical tradition of the nations coming up to Jerusalem to keep this Feast of Joy,” declared ICEJ Executive Director Reverend Malcolm Hedding in his welcoming remarks to the colourful mix of pilgrims from five continents assembled at sunset in the desert of Ein Gedi for the gala opening of music, prayer, teaching and dance.

Arriving at a time when fresh war wounds were forcing the nation to face up collectively to the growing existential threat of a nuclear Iran, the overwhelming support of Christians from so many varied cultures and countries made its own indelible mark on the emotional and physical landscape of Israel. This impact was of no less significance than the thousands of Katuysa rockets that wrought so much destruction and death on the North just two short months earlier.
“This has been a very difficult year for us,” conceded Prime Minister Ehud Olmert during a televised address on the first night of the Feast in Jerusalem’s International Convention Center. “We had the courage to face the adversaries of the State of Israel largely because we have friends like you.”

Experiencing more than just a regular Holy Land tour, American pilgrims like Patricia Goodspeed from Colorado, were open about the fact that they came deliberately: to express their support of the Jewish State and “bring loving-kindness to the people,” following the tumultuous summer in the North.

EMERGING NATIONS

But with some of the largest delegations from Scandinavia and South America, the 2006 celebrations moved the multinational boundaries of the Feast far beyond its perceived core US Evangelical base - fore-shadowing the time when the Bible promises that the eight-day Succot festival will be observed by all “the peoples of the earth.” (Zechariah 14:16)

So great was the diversity of groups from outside the traditionally strong constituencies of Europe and the Americas, that despite the participation of large ICEJ branch-led tours from the US, Britain, Ireland, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, less than one pilgrim in four was from an English-speaking nation.

ICEJ International Director, Jürgen Bühler was hardly surprised. The future, he openly admits, is in Africa, South America and the East - where evangelical support for Israel is growing far faster than anywhere else despite, and perhaps even because of, poverty, persecution and suffering.

“Wherever they have a Bible,” Bühler affirmed, “Christians read about Israel’s final return to the promised land.”

In the face of the rapidly expanding brand of militant Islam now sweeping the developing world, “many in Africa and Asia are prepared to put everything on the line to come up and celebrate the Feast,” he adds: “braving severe diplomatic, social and financial obstacles on the way.”

A 19-nation African delegation, almost 400 pilgrims strong, coupled with a large first-time tour of more than 80 Taiwanese and the now familiar sight of over 500 pilgrims from Brazil seemed to underscore Dr. Bühler’s point emphatically. Notable was the fact that pilgrims came from nations as unexpected and impoverished as Mozambique, Vietnam and Nepal.

It is a growing phenomenon that was reflected in the decision to invite Rev. Mosy Madugba (second left), the ICEJ’s Nigerian Director, to share a keynote Feast platform with three more familiar US-based ministry leaders: Rev. Robert Stearns (Eagles Wings International-left), Sister Gwen Shaw (End Time Handmaidens and Servants) and Pastor Allen Jackson (World Outreach Church, Murfreesboro, TN).

For her part, Sister Gwen – who belied her 82 years with the authority and power of her preaching – received the coveted Nehemiah Award as she spoke on the Tuesday evening: a token of recognition from the ICEJ board for a lifetime’s service to Israel and the Church.

‘A CONTINENT TO WATCH’

But according to Rev. Madugba – a “pastor to pastors” in his native Nigeria, something was different about this year’s Feast. Speaking to The Word from Jerusalem on the fringes of the conference hall he described The Great Hosanna as “by far the rich-
As a new wave of Christians emerge from the developing world with a heart for Israel, a new generation is also rising to the challenge.

74 young adults from 13 nations came together from around the world to meet the Lord, hear His voice and enter into His presence during the course of 10 life-altering days during the Grafted Feast of Tabernacles Tour.

From the shores of the Galilee to Bedouin tents in the desert, this dynamic group of young worshippers trekked through waterfalls, rode camels, and slept under the stars on their journey to Jerusalem.

Learning flexibility in each new environment, the Lord spoke to the group about leaving their spiritual comfort zones: to lay down their fears and worries, pick up their tents and follow His plans and purposes for their lives.

“We didn’t realise that the God of the universe didn’t just want to meet us, He wanted to invade our lives,” remarked Liesl Hedding - who heads up the Grafted ministry of the ICEJ.

“He didn’t just want us to hear His voice, but to move when His voice was spoken. He didn’t want us to enter into His presence but to shake our worlds with His power and purpose for our lives.”

“God has answered my questions and encouraged me,” added 19-year-old Suvi-Maria Koivula from Finland, on her first trip to Israel with Grafted. “My thirst for God has increased more and more. I know He’s alive and my living Father! I want to dream God’s Big Dreams!” 😊

It is a similar story in Angola where Samuel Justo, the only one of his country...
men ever to attend the Feast of Tabernacles, told the _Word from Jerusalem_ that Christians are hungry to know the truth about Israel.

Under the umbrella of the ICEJ, these representatives - from Congo, Ivory Coast, Nigeria and South Africa - signed an agreement to form an ‘African Coalition for Israel’ and launch a four-pronged effort to mobilize African support for Israel, promote the work of the Christian Embassy, support Israel’s diplomatic efforts on the continent, and bring more Africans to the Feast.

“The Church in Angola is beginning to break through many spiritual walls, and is very eager to hear about Israel and God’s purposes for His people,” Justo said.

Although Roman Catholicism remains the dominant religion in this Portuguese-speaking part of war-torn West Africa, evangelical churches are quickly gaining ground. For several years Justo has been hosting meetings and seminars on what the Bible says about Israel. Those who hear are “literally crying out of desire to get to Israel and stand by her in support,” he says.

To Dr. Bühler, Africa is fast becoming one of the strongest Christian forces worldwide, and the ICEJ is making every effort to increase the strength and scope of its ministry across the continent.

As the Feast drew to a close, four of the ICEJ’s African National Directors released a powerful statement following a closed-door meeting with Tourism Minister Herzog.

Despite the prohibitive travel costs and visa restrictions a record-breaking number of Asian delegates took part in the 2006 Feast: 82 arriving from Taiwan alone. In total, 172 pilgrims came from a dozen nations - including Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Nepal, and Malaysia. Among the largest were delegations from the Philippines, China and India, accounting for over 60 pilgrims in total.

But it was the arrival of such a sizeable group from Taiwan that stirred excitement at the ICEJ’s international headquarters in Jerusalem. “We are delighted at the large turnout from Taiwan and the Chinese mainland,” Dr. Bühler said, adding that the Embassy was now hoping to publish its first materials in Chinese. “These areas are extremely important because of their huge populations - including an estimated 100 million Christians in China alone!”

The Taiwanese breakthrough did not, however, occur by chance. It was the fruit of a growing partnership with newly appointed ICEJ national directors Daniel and Linda Chou - pastors of the Bread of Life Christian Church in Taipei.

After being invited to become involved with the ICEJ’s work last year, Linda Chou said she was led to Zechariah 14, which says that “God’s faithful from every nation will go up to Jerusalem, praising the Lord” in celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.

“That is why we’re here!” she said.
Czech championship

ICEJ quiz brings Bible alive in the State Senate hall

By Michael Hines

According to Sedlacek, events like this - organized by ICEJ Czech together with the Bible Society and Scripture Union - are vital not just to remind the nation of its Christian heritage, but to present the Word of God as a living life-changing reality today.

“The most important thing is to live out the Biblical message. We have come here not to test our memory but to spread this message,” he added.

“I was pleased that the Word of God can be spread in the beautiful building of the Senate” said Zdenek Sovis from Brno, a member of the winning team whose efforts were rewarded with a coveted trip to the land of the Bible - Israel.

Speaking on behalf of the Embassy’s international leadership, ICEJ Liaison Officer Doron Schneider told the competitors that Israel holds the key to a deeper Biblical understanding.

“If you want to understand the Bible better, you should visit Israel. It will help you understand the context,” Schneider said. “It is my wish,” he continued, “that you get to know Israel through the eyes of the Bible and not through the media.”

“We want to remind this nation that it was grounded in the Bible for many centuries. The Bible helped our nation survive.”

Karel Sedlacek, ICEJ Czech.

Even as the competition gave way to a worship celebration dubbed “Joy in the Bible” the championship’s Czech hosts set about planning future events beyond their borders - including the possibility of an International Christian Bible Contest in Jerusalem.

After all, for Sedlacek and ICEJ National Director Mojmir Kallus, the Word of God holds the key for transforming any society - whether in their beloved Czech Republic or beyond.
Front Page Jerusalem, the premier Christian radio broadcast out of Israel, is now produced by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. A one-of-a-kind weekly news magazine, Front Page focuses on current affairs in the Middle East, presenting Israel in a positive, biblical light. We give Israeli leaders an uncensored channel to speak to the rest of the world.

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The Jerusalem Post Christian Edition is a monthly news magazine dedicated to the unique interests of Israel’s Christian friends, published in partnership with the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.
The board of directors of the Pentecostal European Fellowship, an umbrella organization representing over 40 denominations across Europe encompassing close to 5 million members, has decided to take a stand of friendship and solidarity with Israel. This stand was announced by the PEF Directors at a reception hosted at the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem in early November.

“We regret that certain churches are considering divesting from Israel, while we’ve also seen some nations in Europe stepping away from Israel,” Rev. Ingolf Ellssel of Germany, the Chairman of PEF, told the gathering. “Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Europe have a tradition of praying for and engaging with Israel, but we are determined to harness our rapidly growing movement to do even more for the Jewish people and their embattled nation.”

Speaking in his native German to emphasize the unique, tragic history his nation shares with the Jewish people, Ellssel recalled how his own father “lost 16 years of his life in the service of Hitler and then as a Soviet war prisoner, before finding Jesus at age 33.”

In response, Shaya Ben Yehuda, director of international relations at Yad Vashem, called the growing movement of Christian supporters of Israel the “modern righteous Gentiles of our day.”

Rev. Ellssel estimates that there are now as many as 34 million Christians on the European continent who identify themselves as Pentecostals/Charismatics – the fastest growing segment of Christianity with some 625 million followers worldwide. Ellssel’s group is seeking to organise this expanding constituency into a lobbying force in Europe that will also be able to positively impact European relations with Israel.

The PEF leaders were in Israel on a solidarity and study mission, and held their annual board meetings in Jerusalem as a sign of their determination to support the Jewish State. The directors will report on their visit at the annual meeting of PEF’s governing association in March 2007 and will recommend that all its constituent churches join in standing with Israel.

“Our agenda will include more than prayer and words of support, but practical measures such as encouraging business investment in Israel and Christian tourism to the Holy Land,” said Rev. Ellssel. “In this regard, we realise that the ministry of the International Christian Embassy has been filling a vacuum that we see in the Church today, and we are united as a board to stand with this ministry in the days ahead.”

“We recognise that Israel remains elect of God and a focus of His redemptive plan for the entire world,” added Ellsell. “We understand that the remarkable Jewish return to this land is a fulfillment of biblical promises to Israel, and this encourages us to believe that God will keep His prophetic promises to us as well.”

Reverend Ingolf Ellssel and Jürgen Bühler address Israeli guests and Board members of the Pentecostal European Fellowship at the ICEJ in Jerusalem.
Refugees forever

ECI urges Brussels to re-house destitute Palestinians

By Michael Hines

“Despite countless diplomatic initiatives spanning more than six decades - the Middle East conflict has defied resolution.” This statement itself is hardly groundbreaking, but the context that gave rise to it certainly was.

Delivered by ICEJ International Director Jürgen Bühler before a well-attended room of parliamentarians and officials from the European Parliament, these words set the scene for a stinging indictment of Europe’s failed approach towards the Palestinians during the European Coalition for Israel’s annual policy conference in Brussels this September.

“Today more than 4.3 million designated refugees live in poverty across the region, many in squalid United Nations camps that have, in turn, become breeding grounds for extremism and terror,” continued Dr. Bühler.

“European taxpayers contribute more than €200 million a year to maintaining this self-perpetuating Middle East refugee crisis, with scant attention as to whether this money is improving the long-term chances of peace or not.”

For almost four years, the European Coalition for Israel - of which the ICEJ is a founding member - has consistently raised the bar of debate within the European Union, urging lawmakers and officials of the powerful 25-nation bloc to re-evaluate their attitude and approach to Israel.

In keeping with the ECI’s growing reputation as a constructive voice within the halls of Europe’s governing elite, Bühler’s speech and the accompanying policy paper sought to build on core European values: “freedom, human rights and the respect for human dignity,” in proposing innovative and viable solutions to the Palestinian refugee crisis.

“The most important thing,” Dr. Bühler said afterwards, “is that European Christians are now making a well-informed, powerful case for Israel in the EU. We’re not arguing against the Palestinians - quite the opposite. In fact we’re challenging Europe to start defending their basic rights rather than the political interests of the Arab leaders that have put them there; to give them - and everyone else - a horizon of hope for the future.”

To support the Embassy’s involvement in the European Union, please return your gift in the enclosed envelope. For more about the ECI go to: www.ecji.org. To download a summary of Dr. Bühler’s paper, ‘European Aid to Palestinian Refugees’, go to our website: www.icej.org.
Pipe dream

By Lena Kachinski

B raving the unidentifiable smells, the layers of dirt and the uninvited creatures that creep along the basement walls of old apartment blocks, four Hebrew University students took their budding careers “down the drain” this summer to assist Israeli families on welfare in the northern Jerusalem suburb of Neve Ya’akov.

The instructors at one of Hebrew University’s Masters programs in social work looked forward to graduating this year’s students after months of hard work and study. They were not going to let them go, however, without asking them to create a short-term non-profit project of their own.

After learning that one of their number had prior experience as a plumber, the students seized upon the idea of organizing plumbing assistance for low-income families in the Jerusalem suburb of Neve Ya’akov. That’s when municipal welfare worker Einat Ben Yehuda stepped in.

“We had many low-income families living in apartment buildings with old plumbing in need of repair,” she says. “This was the perfect opportunity for the students to invest in the community and for our families to get the help that they needed.”

The university classmates soon found a group of local plumbing students that were willing to provide their time to help the families.

After spending years battling against backed up drain pipes and leaky shower heads, many families in Neve Ya’akov became excited about the idea of giving the students a run at their pipes. But when the community council was unable to find funding for the equipment the plumbers needed to complete the job, it looked like the project was destined for failure. Unwilling to accept defeat, Einat continued searching for someone willing to purchase the needed tools.

When Nicole Yoder caught wind of the project, she immediately saw a unique and unconventional way for the ICEJ’s Social Assistance Program to help the Neve Ya’akov community. SAP was able to buy the equipment at cost and was happy to put it in the hands of the plumbers and watch them get to work.

“It was a great opportunity to join the students and the community leaders in creating better living conditions for these homes,” Nicole said.

Arriving in overalls, work boots and with fingers trained for the healing of ail- ing pipes, the plumbing team arrived with their hands, and their hearts, at the ready. Under the supervision of their teachers, the plumbers manoeuvred the new equipment in and around bathrooms, basements and crawl spaces. The team was able to fix leaks and replace worn and damaged parts that could lead to worse, and potentially hazardous, problems in the future.

In the end, 32 plumbing projects were completed in 19 separate apartment buildings. Each project saved the families hundreds and thousands of shekels. Chaim Turgeman, whose apartment building was part of the project, says that without the help from SAP the project could not have happened.

“The dedication and professionalism shown during the project dramatically improved the quality of life in our building,” says Chaim. “These are people who, without your help, would never have been able to make these repairs. Thank you!”

For over 25 years the ICEJ’s Social Assistance Program has helped meet the pressing needs of the poor and underprivileged throughout the land, showing Christian care to the people of Israel in every sector of society, through thousands of practical projects such as this. Please see the enclosed donation form or email sapdept@icej.org to find out how you can partner with us and show Israel you care this holiday season!
Give $100 or more to our ongoing efforts to help war-torn northern Israel and we'll send you a free copy of our new documentary *Behind the Front Line* - featuring exclusive footage and interviews from the conflict with Hizballah - narrated by prominent Egyptian human rights campaigner Rev. Majed El Shafie and produced in partnership with the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.

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Striving for unity

Living out the ministry of reconciliation

By Malcolm Hedding

There is no doubt that unity or being at one is an important subject in the Bible. Indeed it is more than important, it is essential to those who seek to build and pursue the Kingdom of God. Those who do this cannot be successful without it. One would therefore think that Christian leaders and workers would highly prize it. Not so! The work of God is riddled with schisms, divisions and brokenness. No wonder our impact is so weak and no wonder the world has difficulty believing our message.

After all, redemption has at its very heart the idea of unity and reconciliation. Our disunity is thus a denial of our claim to be redeemed. The early church knew this and worked hard at living it out (Acts 1:14, 2:46, 8:6; Philippians 2:1-4).

Ephesians 4 gives us a good overview of the grounds of our unity. That is, the things we should all agree on, maintain and guard. Thankfully, the power of the Holy Spirit in us has given us unity already. We therefore have to preserve this powerful desire in us and not work against it by allowing carnal attitudes and feelings to suppress it. The latter is real because our “old man” does not die easily (Galatians 5:16-17).

So then our unity flows from:

1. Unity of belief

We should and must all subscribe to the essentials of our faith. These are:

The dignity of the Church: It is a living body infused with the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:4a). The Church is not merely a gathering of people.

The destiny or hope of the Church: That is, to be transformed into the image of Jesus and be expectant about His coming (verse 4b).

The nature of God: He is one but revealed in three persons (verse 5a).
The significance of Baptism: Our identification with the finished work of Jesus (verse 5b). For believers, baptism may have many modes but it has only one meaning.

The Sovereignty of God: Who is above creation and all power; Who made everything and lives in His people (verse 6).

2. Unity in diversity

We all differ in gifting and function. Our spiritual equipping should not, however, drive us into independent ministry! The equipping that God in Christ Jesus gives us is for the growth, encouragement and edification of His Body (Ephesians 4:7-12; 1 Corinthians 14:26).

It is when we forget this that we see our peculiar gifting as special and worthy of a singular platform. This is not only dangerous, in terms of removing ourselves from a proper spiritual covering, but it also robs the local expression of the people of God of a vital contribution that could and should enhance its blessing and development.

There is no doubt that the gifts that God sometimes bestows upon His children demand a bigger audience than the local church and scripture acknowledges this (Acts 13:3), and thus endorses ministry giftings that are local and trans-local. That is, they are sent out from time to time to the wider expression of the church. To restrict them to the local or trans-local arena is to disrupt the unity of diversity. They must function in a local church and they must be released to travel and go beyond it.

3. Unity of faith

The goal of all Christian endeavour is that we become like Jesus (Ephesians 4:13-16). Any biblical pursuit that does not have this ultimate agenda and goal in mind is unbalanced and violates the unity of the faith. The consequence is that, because there is no central emphasis upon the development of godly character, the people of God remain spiritual babes (Ephesians 4:14-15). This in turn births division, carnal behaviour, schism and infighting. The Church has been and is plagued with this problem. The reason is always the same: not enough focus upon the “unity of the faith” (1 Corinthians 1:10-17).

Even we who love Israel and work for her blessing and comfort must recognise that the transformation of our characters is more important and should transcend all that we do, even for Israel.

IN THE END, a godly love for unity is demonstrated by a driving passion to keep the people of God reconciled. This is precisely why Paul says that we have all been given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). That is, we are empowered to preserve, maintain and strive for unity. Who is sufficient for this?
North Korea’s brazen nuclear test in early October served as a shocking wake-up call to the dangerous new era the world is entering. In fact, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert admits he’s now having trouble even getting to sleep at night worrying over Iran’s renegade nuclear program.

Reviewing seismic readings and intelligence gathered from North Korea’s underground test on October 9, Western analysts now suggest that Pyongyang still has a way to go before it can mount a serious nuclear threat via its multi-range missile systems. Either the nuclear device failed to detonate, or a small atomic reaction was triggered by a larger conventional explosion.

Still, the test amplified concerns over the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the hands of rogue regimes and terrorist groups. “If the lower-yield estimates are valid, then it’s not a militarised system, but also not something a terrorist would reject,” one American intelligence officer told The New York Times.

For Israelis, North Korea’s test and its strategic links to Iran have brought home the growing nuclear threat like never before.

North Korea is an isolated, impoverished country and yet it has managed to develop a credible nuclear program. Iran, on the other hand, is a regional power with oil wealth and a nuclear program much larger than Pyongyang’s. Spread out over some 70 facilities nationwide, much of Iran’s program is hidden away in reinforced underground bunkers.

And while the nuclear motives of Kim Jong Il’s regime flow from a misguided survival instinct, the Ayatollahs are driven by Koranic visions of global destruction and future Islamic glory.

So far, Israel’s strategy on stopping Iran’s nuclear quest has been to defer to its American ally. Washington, in turn, has deferred to the EU-3 (France, Germany and the UK) to negotiate a diplomatic solution with Teheran before resorting to sanctions or military force. After exhaustive talks and generous incentives, the Europeans finally seem convinced that Iran is acting in ‘bad faith,’ but veto-wielding powers Russia and China have balked at imposing a tough sanctions regime through the United Nations Security Council.

Reaching ‘Critical Mass’

*Israeli concerns heighten over Iranian nukes*

BY DAVID PARSONS

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, center, inspecting a new heavy-water production plant added in August to the nation’s ambitious nuclear program. (Photo: AP)
The Security Council’s reaction to the North Korean test was seen by Israel as a dry-run for the UN’s ongoing deliberations on the Iranian issue. If so, the limited hand-slap given Pyongyang, due to opposition from Moscow and Beijing, does not bode well for the Jewish state.

Many Israelis are getting anxious over the slow pace of international efforts to stop Iran and are pressing their own leaders to take action. Others think Israel should continue to keep a low profile and stress the global nature of the threat. Still others are saying Israel can learn to live with a nuclear Iran.

Olmert recently said he has full confidence in US President George W. Bush when it comes to Iran. Olmert simply believes Bush when he says he will never allow the Islamic Republic to possess nuclear weapons.

But at the opening of the Knesset winter session in mid-October, Olmert seemed to have taken on a greater urgency about the issue. He laid out a new agenda that jettisoned ‘realignment’ in the West Bank and instead focuses on shoring up his government in order to confront the Iranian challenge.

“Iran is deceiving the international community,” Olmert declared. “It is dragging its feet and trying to buy time to complete its dangerous nuclear program. The Iranian threat is an existential threat to Israel; it is an existential threat to world peace.”

Olmert followed this up with a trip to Moscow, where he urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to roll back his country’s nuclear cooperation with Iran, saying Israel has “no margin for error” on this issue. His pleas came amid reports that Russia is not only pressing ahead with plans to activate Iran’s nuclear reactor in Bushehr next year, but also to provide an advanced anti-aircraft missile system to protect the site from pre-emptive air strikes.

Meanwhile Iran’s defiant president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has not shown any let-up in his fierce rhetoric against Israel. After assuring his countrymen that he indeed has a “connection with Allah,” Ahmadinejad delivered an address at the end of Ramadan once again calling for Israel’s demise. He insisted, “the Zionist regime is doomed,” adding that “this regime, thanks to Allah, has lost the reason for its existence… You should believe that this regime is disappearing.”

Ahmadinejad went on to call Israel’s leaders a “group of terrorists” that had been “imposed… on the region” by the US and its allies. “It is in your own interest to distance yourself from these criminals,” he warned. “This is an ultimatum. Don’t complain tomorrow.”

Given such sabre-rattling speeches, the growing Iranian threat has other Middle East states thinking nuclear as well. In September, Gamal Mubarak, son of the Egyptian president and his presumptive heir, suggested that Egypt pursue nuclear energy. Saudi Arabia could also acquire nuclear warheads from Pakistan, since it funded Islamabad’s nuclear program, according to The Washington Post. In addition, A.Q. Khan, the father of Pakistan’s nuclear bomb, already ran a lucrative black market for nuclear technology transfers to scores of Islamic countries, including Egypt, Syria and Iran.

To top it off, IAEA chief Mohammed El Baradei has just warned there may be as many as 30 countries pursuing ‘peaceful’ nuclear capabilities that could quickly use that know-how to produce varying types of atomic weapons, including so-called ‘dirty bombs.’ So the issue of nuclear proliferation is a global concern that, for Israel in particular, is reaching critical mass.
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