COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE

An Israeli soldier comforts a Gaza resident before evacuating him from the Gush Katif bloc. More photos and full coverage of Israel’s historic disengagement, plus what you can do to help inside.
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 Web site at www.icej.org/get-involved to send your gift. All donations are tax deductible according to the law of your country.

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WORD FROM JERUSALEM
Dear Friends,

By the time you receive this edition of our magazine, the disengagement decision of the government of Israel will have been implemented and completed. To be sure, this has been a very painful experience for Israel and the heartache and trauma arising from it will be felt for years.

The communities of this region have been settled and established for 30 years. All in all, approximately three generations have lived, prayed, farmed, married, buried and built in the area. All this is now a memory, and as we have seen, terrorists have moved in to celebrate their triumph. It has been and is a sad day indeed!

Lives have been uprooted, homes demolished and all that is left is shattered dreams. We know however that God has not left His dear people. The Bible says, “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old.” (Isaiah 63:9) In short, He is not transcendent and removed from the scene of our human sorrows. No, He is ever near and though His ways are past finding out, He will nevertheless accomplish His eternal purpose and in the end we will all have to say, “See how much He loved us.”

Our world of finite existence finds these things very hard to grapple with. We would rather have everything reduced to our level of understanding, then we could really interact with God and defend our cause. Such was the thinking of Job until he truly saw the majesty, sovereignty, wisdom and power of God. When he saw these, he humbled himself and declared, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken but I will not answer; yes twice but I will proceed no further.” (Job 40:4-5)

It must be remembered that Job also lost his home, family, crops and way of life but in the end God blessed him. This is the same God who watches over the people of Gush Katif. There will always be joy in the morning and we must hold on for this.

All this underlines, yet again, the importance of our ministry. We are here to comfort Israel in her time of suffering and joy. Our upcoming Feast gives us all an opportunity to appear in Zion with just such a purpose.

I look forward to welcoming you!

Yours in Jesus,

Malcolm Hedding
Israel is experiencing what many have termed the most tumultuous and uncertain times since the 1967 Six Day War. Yet even in these pre-disengagement days, an international group of 28 young adult Christians came to Israel for Grafted's first Summer Hands-On Program.

Part of the initial vision of Grafted was to create opportunities for individuals to come to Israel, not simply to tour, but to actively express love and comfort to the nation through service projects. This vision became a successful reality on July 22, 2005 as young men and women from 8 different countries flew into Israel to begin the 12-day program.

“I decided I would like to learn more about Israel, but also to do something to help the people of Israel and show them I love them,” said Stefan Jantner, 21, from Germany.

The purpose of the project was three fold: 1) to bless Israel as an international body of believers, 2) to equip young adults with fundamental Biblical principles enabling them to return to their countries as ambassadors for God’s purposes regarding Israel, and 3) to encourage Christians to discover and rejoice over the Jewish roots of their faith as they visit several Biblical sights in the Land.

“I: was the perfect mix of touring, serving and information,” said Deborah Aeschbach of Switzerland, “I have so much information to take home with me.” This was her second tour with Grafted. After enjoying Grafted’s Feast of Tabernacles Tour last October she came back, this time bringing seven friends with her.

The summer program included several days of touring throughout Israel’s rich, beautiful and historic land. Participants walked through the streets of Jerusalem, were baptized in the Jordan River, sailed across the Sea of Galilee, and worshiped under the stars in the Judean Desert.

The informative aspect of the tour included participating in a series of lec-
tures and discussion groups covering topics such as Christian anti-Semitism, disengagement, biblical Zionism, God’s blessings to the Arab nations and the truth about Islam. The participants were privileged to hear, among others, Executive Director Malcolm Hedding; International Director Jürgen Bühler; and Hebrew University Professor Moshe Sharon.

While each aspect of the project was vital, an overwhelming majority of participants agreed that it was the interaction with the people that left the greatest impression. Grafted teamed up with ICEJ’s Social Assistance Program to organize hands-on projects including a day camp for Jewish children ages 5 to 12, gardening at Hansen Hospital, visiting survivors of terrorist attacks, and cleaning homes of the elderly. There was also a vibrant street outreach to Arab children in the Old City, painting homes and cleaning a local municipal park. A favorite for several participants was the outreach to a struggling Russian-Israeli family. Grafted supplied them with food, household products and baby products for their tenth child. They also took the family for a special picnic outing and trip to the mall for 12 pairs of new shoes to outfit the entire family.

“It comes down to one-on-one contact. Your ability to love and pray for Israel is strengthened when you actually meet the nation of Israel…when you make a heart-to-heart connection you can truly pray for the people,” said Liesl Hedding, Grafted Young Adult’s Coordinator. “Meeting Israelis allows you to be in the awesome role of actually being God’s hands and God’s feet. You really tap into His heart for the people. We love to serve as He did when He came because it enables us to let His love shine out and the result is very impacting and deep.”

Indeed the response of Israelis showed that Grafted’s message penetrated their hearts.

“We are dependent on groups that like to garden and help,” said Oded Meshulam, Hansen Hospital gardening coordinator. “We’d never make this place beautiful without their help.”

At the end of the tour, Liesl Hedding reminded the young adults of the special calling God has placed on this generation to run first with the purposes of God and to be, “watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem.”

Each individual had their opinions about Israel’s current condition, yet there were no orange ribbons waving to express solidarity with the settlers nor were there blue ribbons to demonstrate approval of the government’s actions. The Grafted group was in Israel to show their comfort to all of Israel through whatever circumstances. The love and service were tangible, unconditional and received by the Israelis with incredulous gratitude and respect.

Comments on the tour:

“The kids experienced different languages and games from other countries all over the world were giving them a special experience that would stay in their memories for a long time. They were painting together, playing with balls, water balloons, make-up, dancing, singing and most important laughing all day long.”

Michael Ben-Avi, Director of the Community Council Kiryat Hayovel

“My experience in Israel was an amazing one and I will never forget it and hopefully will be returning at some point! Quite literally the best time of my life!”

Michael Stapleton, 24, USA

“The mixture of touring, lectures and social contacts was just amazing and special….All the Swiss group was deeply impressed and had a wonderful, rich holiday – no, it was more than that: A rich time with an impact on our lives!”

Deborah Aeschbach, Switzerland
Streams of refreshing in the desert

By Sharon Bowater

IN GEDI – In the very places where the Psalmist spent much of his time, 20 worshippers from the United States, Singapore, Turkey and Israel, plus five ICEJ staff gathered for ICEJ’s Streams in the Desert worship conference.

The placid setting of the desert brought the participants to a time of quiet reflection at the beginning of the conference as ICEJ Music Director Chuck King and songwriter Dennis Jernigan led workshops and teaching seminars.

This was the first such conference sponsored by the ICEJ. Termed a “spiritual getaway,” the first few days took on the relaxing atmosphere of the lowest elevation on earth – the Ein Gedi desert along the Dead Sea. After a few days there, the group set out for the Galilee before culminating the tour with a worship event in Jerusalem.

The initial vision behind “Streams in the Desert” was to provide a time of rest and refreshing for those involved in worship ministry – a time to take a break from regular life and duties to be ministered to, and meet with the Lord in a personal way. It was also an opportunity to introduce the participants, many of whom had never been here before, to Israel, and to spark a love for the land and the people.

“I want to get more involved in the community,” Dawson said. “We’re in such an international environment, sometimes you feel distant from the people. This was an opportunity to serve the local community with the skills I have.”

Dawson earned his lifeguard certification in New Zealand where he also earned his degree in physical education, then taught in Denmark and England. Dawson came to Israel for the Feast in 2003 and began working at the ICEJ in April 2004.

ICEJ volunteer lifeguards at Israeli summer camps

ETACH TIKVA – Water was splashing as kids shrieked in various languages and sneaked illegal dives off the side of the pool. With his newly learned smattering of words in Arabic, the lifeguard tried to maintain some order.

This was the day in the week of one ICEJ volunteer who took his vacation to volunteer at two camps in need of a certified lifeguard. Christian Dawson, of New Zealand, who works as head of ICEJ’s Logistics Department, brought his downunder credentials to work in the Holy Land.

“I really wanted to keep the worship and teaching times that we had during the sessions

Prayer during the sessions

Dawson gives instructions while a man interprets for the children in Arabic.
The chance to work with these annual camps - one a Jewish-Arab reconciliation camp for believers and one Arab Christian - arose when some of Dawson’s friends found out he was a lifeguard. They asked him to join their team, and thus he spent the week with 85 children between the ages of 9-12 from all across Israel.

“I believe this is part of what I’m called to do here,” Dawson said of his involvement with local believers.

Jessica King, daughter of ICEJ Music Director Chuck King, also attended the Jewish-Arab reconciliation camp for the first time. A student in Israeli schools, Jessica said this was the first time she had met Arab Christians.

“Friendship was the most important thing we learned,” she said.

Highlights of the week included an early morning hike to Nahal David, the actual “streams in the desert” where David fled from Saul; a camel ride; and a night under the stars in a Bedouin tent. There were many times of spontaneous worship, like singing in the cool of the empty water cistern on Masada and reflecting as we crossed the Sea of Galilee in a wooden boat at dusk. The pilot stopped the boat and we worshipped as the first stars appeared in the sky and waves lapped against the bottom of the boat.

In our times of worship along the way, Jernigan wrote some new songs relating to our location and what the Lord was saying to the group.
The week concluded with a night of worship at The Pavilion in Jerusalem. Jernigan ministered in song and with his testimony. Many lives were touched by the Holy Spirit.

“We are still in awe of our experience in Israel. We are sharing with anyone and everyone who will listen about what we have seen and what we have heard,” said Garmon Smith, from America, who attended the conference with his wife, Nancy.

It was beautiful to see every person on the tour, each coming with their own special circumstances and needs, receiving something special from the Lord.

“All I can say about everything I experienced is ‘wow!’ The hand of God was on everything we did,” said Christina Cameron, from the United States. “The Lord truly blessed all of you and ICEJ’s efforts and planning.”

King said that just before the conference, a visiting minister speaking at our ICEJ staff devotions said that our responsibility as pastors and worship leaders is to bring the people to the mountain and let God speak to them.

“That’s exactly what happened: We witnessed the Lord touching people in so many areas of their lives – people who were weary in service, with areas of brokenness and disappointment, experiencing the refreshing of God’s presence,” King said.

This year our Feast opens on 16 October with an outdoor event at Sultan’s Pool. This natural amphitheatre situated under the walls of the Old City is a spectacular setting. At night, the lights of the Old City walls and the full moon of the Feast of Tabernacles shine upon the area, creating an atmosphere that is filled with beauty, wonder and expectation. The Psalmist saw this and declared:

12 Walk about Zion,  
And go all around her.  
Count her towers;  
13 Mark well her bulwarks;  
Consider her palaces;  
That you may tell it to the generation following.  
14 For this is God,  
Our God forever and ever;  
He will be our guide  
Even to death.

Psalm 48:12-14

At Sultan’s Pool we will experience the reflection of God as we gaze in wonder at the walls and bulwarks of old Jerusalem and together we will rise up to worship Him. Don’t miss this!

FEAST PREVIEW

While the Feast of Tabernacles 2005 carries the same theme this year as it did last year, “Thy Kingdom Come,” the rendering of this theme will be very different.

“Last year was majesty, kingdom, royalty,” said ICEJ Music Director Chuck King. “This year it is more of an earthy expression.”

The kingdom themes are derived from Jesus’ parables.

“‘Thy Kingdom Come’ is so rich and we felt there was more to say and minister about the kingdom,” he said.
The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and Ruder Finn Israel, ICEJ’s Public Relations Company, was given the prestigious “Roaring Lion” award at the 2005 Annual Israel Public Relations Association’s Awards Ceremony in Tel Aviv.

The award was given in the category of “Special Events and Conferences” for the Embassy’s “25th Annual Feast of Tabernacles Celebration.” The entire audience of public relations consultants in Israel gave a standing ovation when they viewed video footage showing some 5,000 Christians who came to the Feast during the Intifada.

On hand to receive the award with Ruder Finn was Timothy King, ICEJ financial director.

Israel’s government and Postal Authority issued a unique commemorative stamp in honour of the late Pope John Paul II citing his contributions to Christian-Jewish dialogue, his initiating diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Israel, and his lifelong record promoting Holocaust understanding.

The stamp, described by Communications Minister Dalia Itzik as an “historic initiative” marks the first time that a non-Jewish religious leader has appeared on an Israeli stamp. It was formally unveiled in the Knesset in July in the presence of ICEJ Financial Director Timothy King and other local Christian leaders.

David Schutz, son of Jim and Leslie Schutz, took four medals for his age group in March in the Israeli National Swimming Championships: gold in the 50m breaststroke; gold in the 100m breaststroke; silver in the 200m breaststroke; and bronze in the 200m individual medley.

In August, David also won two silver medals (50m and 100m breaststroke) despite recovering from a bout with chicken pox just two weeks before the competition.

David, 15, was born in Jerusalem and has been swimming competitively for the past seven years. Jim is the ICEJ’s liaison to local congregations. He and Leslie have lived in Israel for 18 years.
Covenant goes international
First overseas tour in Germany very successful

While “The Covenant” has been an instrument of comfort in the lives of Israelis for the past several years, the first German tour of the musical touched those grappling with the guilt of the Holocaust.

A remarkable effect of “The Covenant” (“Der Bund” in German), was the easing of the pain that Germans still live with as they saw the promises of God fulfilled in the aftermath of the Holocaust with the birth of Israel in 1948.

“The opportunity we had to share the message of ‘The Covenant’ to bring healing and restoration to people who

ICEJ national director’s meeting

From the 18th to the 21st May, the ICEJ’s National Directors, from all parts of the world, gathered in Jerusalem at the Regency Hotel for their annual conference. This year the gathering was more special than in recent years because it included a special banquet on the night of the 19th to celebrate the ICEJ’s 25th anniversary. It goes without saying that this was a festive occasion marked by a real sense of joy and thankfulness to God for His faithfulness over the years.

The conference itself was thought-provoking, with a presentation given by Bat Ye’or on her theory of “Eurabia” - the Islamization of Europe. The presentation challenged us about the urgent issues facing us in terms of being faithful to our heavenly mandate to comfort Zion.

A very special part of the conference, apart from the banquet, was the invitation to attend a gathering in the Knesset where the ICEJ was formally honoured by the Christian Allies Caucus. Short statements were made by several Members of Knesset, including Dr Yuri Shtern, the chairman of the Caucus, and a commemorative medal was presented to the ICEJ.

Our Executive Director Malcolm Hedding replied by saying that, more than ever, the ICEJ is determined to follow through on its mission and calling to stand with Israel.
still live with the guilt of the Holocaust was amazing."

The daily schedule of the German tour involved travel, stage set up and a performance each night. There was also a performance in Linz, Austria and in Basel, Switzerland.

ICEJ Music Director Chuck King said the cast played to up to 8,000 people, with audiences of several hundred at each hall. At some performances, people were turned away by the hundreds. Not all who attended were pro-Israel believers as the show was marketed via secular channels as well. But the response, King said, was phenomenal.

The performances in the former communist East Germany were the heart of the tour, King said. One of the performances was in a cathedral, where the pastor said he never saw the place so full.

The narration of the musical was in German with songs performed in English and Hebrew.

With the universal appeal of the musical, King said “The Covenant” now has an international mantle. He said that it is not just Israel’s story but it is everyone’s story.

The earlier Israeli tour of “Ha Brit” proved useful, as some of the younger cast members gained experience and then joined the German tour. They were from Israel, Finland and Norway. In total, 20 cast members and five crew volunteers traveled with the tour.

“Every time we perform it, it’s alive and impacting,” King said. “It stays alive because it’s the Word of God.”

“The Covenant” is scheduled to be performed in Los Angeles next year during the Azusa Street revival centennial festivities.
In the second week of May, a strategic meeting involving ICEJ Executive Director Malcolm Hedding and International Director Jürgen Bühler was held in Worthing in the south of England.

This meeting, also attended by Wendy Hogarth, Graham Jefferson, David Elms and Michael Young, laid down the foundation blocks for future development and expansion into all regions of the United Kingdom.

The meetings, held at New Life Church, were characterized by much prayer and, “In the end we all had a very clear picture of where the Lord was leading us,” said Malcolm Hedding. In short, an ICEJ Ministry Team was put together and it is this team that will take responsibility for and spearhead the work in the region. The members will assume particular responsibility for areas of ministry.

These are:
1. Administration - Wendy Hogarth
2. Propogation (Ministry to Pastors) - David Elms, Graham Field and Graham Jefferson
3. Public Relations - Michael Young
4. Education (Day Conferences) - Graham Field
5. Itineration - Michael Young, Malcolm Hedding and Jürgen Bühler

In addition, we are proud to announce that at our annual ICEJ National Directors’ meeting in Jerusalem, held a week later, it was also decided to appoint Graham Field as the director of ICEJ United Kingdom. We are thrilled with this development and with those outlined above and we now look forward to a new season of blessing in the United Kingdom.

We were also most grateful for the prayer input and support that Pauline Young gave to the strategic gathering in Worthing.

ICEJ USA took part in the Fourth Annual Christian-Israel Solidarity Event at the Israeli Embassy in Washington D.C. in May, featuring keynote speakers Daniel Ayalon, ambassador of Israel, and Pat Robertson, founder and chairman of the Christian Broadcast Network.

Ayalon said the Evangelical community, “Is a bedrock of support for Israel in the United States,” and thanked attendees for “being a strong and courageous voice for Israel even during times when it was not so popular.”
North American Aliyah

By Donna Holbrook

TORONTO – The largest number of North American Jews ever to move to Israel in one day boarded two planes this summer with several immigrants who were helped on their way to Israel by the ICEJ.

Although the first waves of Aliyah were mostly Russian and former Soviet Union Jews, a smaller but steady stream of Jews from North America (many from Russian background) have been making Aliyah to Israel.

I was prompted to become involved with Aliyah in Canada after hearing and being spiritually impacted by a prophetic word that Russian Jews would come through Canada to make their way to Israel. Two years ago, I brought this up with ICEJ Executive Director Malcolm Hedding who told me he had heard the same word 10 years prior.

“So we are closer now to that time of fulfilment,” I responded.

I connected with A. Howard Flower, national director of ICEJ Russia, and we decided to develop a program through North America.

“The Lord had already put many of these Russian Jews in Canada,” Flower said. “There was a huge outpouring from the FSU (former Soviet Union) and some Russian Jews moved to Canada. It’s a cold country like most of the Soviet Union, it’s somewhat of a socialistic country and the Canadians have a heart for refugees.”

In the 1880s an exodus of Jews escaping the pogroms in Russia also chose Canada for the same reasons. Another wave of Jewish people who moved to Canada is from Cuba. Fidel Castro “let them go” and they went with the help of Canadians, Flower said.

To begin the ICEJ program, I contacted the Toronto Israel Aliyah Centre and through them, their agents in Montreal. This initial connection has developed into a friendly bond with these agencies. They were enthusiastic about our willingness and pro-active approach to assist them in returning
their people to their homeland. To their knowledge, no Christian ministry had offered this assistance before.

Once they approve and complete the documentation of an individual, couple or family, ICEJ Canada is notified either by the “shlichah,” Jewish Aliyah agent, or, more regularly, through Flower in St. Petersburg who helps coordinate and fund Aliyah applicants. Funding also comes from Ministry to Israel, ICEJ Finland, Finnish Exodus Committee and ICEJ Russia.

The ICEJ project has so far helped more than 100 Jews emigrate from North America. Each person gets a grant of $500 (US) and is reimbursed for vouchers and sometimes travelling expenses.

One woman said she had no financial means to make Aliyah, although it was her heart’s desire. She was referred to the ICEJ and received a generous gift that enabled her to move to Israel.

“It was so encouraging and really important to know that there are people, even strangers, who are so excited and supportive of your decision to settle in Israel that they are willing to help financially,” Ilana said.

There is no experience quite like the one when, for the first time, you meet the “olim” (immigrants to Israel) on their last day’s visit to the Aliyah Centre where you meet, shake hands and present them with a gift of money, made possible by hundreds of ICEJ supporters who have a heart to see God’s people return to their homeland, Israel.

They are thrilled and amazed that we want to help them make their move easier through this gift and through the support once they are in Israel through the ICEJ Jerusalem Support Center’s absorption program and Social Assistance Program.

It is a work of our heart to God’s people to see them restored to their land of promise.

Donna Holbrook is the National Director of ICEJ Canada. A. Howard Flower, National Director of ICEJ Russia contributed to this report.

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Back to school

ICEJ reaches more than 1000 families including recent Gaza evacuees

By Nicole Jansezian

Jerusalem - Every year the ICEJ helps impoverished Israeli students back to school with the endless and expensive lists of school supplies. This year, included among the hundreds of families receiving help are children relocated during Israel’s disengagement from Gaza.

Unlike many countries, Israel requires public school children to purchase their own books which can sometimes cost up to 1000 shekels (about $230) per child. The expense for families who have several children in school is oftentimes unaffordable.

“In the beginning of the school year, the children sometimes start school without books,” said Raisa Borchanau,

Nicole Yoder hands out backpacks to Gaza evacuees who will be attending new schools this fall.
a recent immigrant from the Ukraine with four school-age children. “One year the children didn’t have books for awhile and I had to make copies of other students’ books for a few weeks.”

The higher the grade, the more expensive the books are. For Raisa’s second grade son, the total amount of books he needed cost 550 shekels. Her high school aged son had a list of books tallying more than 800 shekels. This doesn’t include supplies or a school bag either.

This year, ICEJ’s Jerusalem Support Centre (JSC) provided vouchers for 200 shekels each to 110 children in Jerusalem. ICEJ’s Social Assistance Program (SAP) provided money to several social welfare agencies to buy school bags, supplies and books for the students on their lists.

SAP’s Nicole Yoder, ICEJ social worker, said that SAP was called upon to help 103 children whose families were just moved from Gush Katif. The children, who will obviously be attending a new school, come from a low socioeconomic background and will not be able to afford school bags and other supplies.

“People don’t realize how expensive the books are, and then they still have to buy book bags, notebooks, paper, pens and pencils,” said Gina Utterback, director of the JSC.

SAP will also be helping to support 50 families in an Arab village in the Galilee, about 800 families through four social welfare departments and 50 families through a community centre.

“Due to (Jerusalem) municipality budget cuts, the social welfare department was not expecting to be able to help families at all,” said Sarit Angel, a Jerusalem social worker. “With SAP and other donations, we were able to help families this year. We see it as a great importance to provide for the basic needs of all children in the area of education and to create equal opportunities for kids who come from low income areas.”

ICEJ’s Jerusalem Support Center gives particular help to new immigrants from the Former Soviet Union now living in Jerusalem, while the Social Assistance Program helps Israelis on a nationwide scale.

Therefore ICEJ appreciates your continued support of both departments since their activities, though they can be viewed as similar, are in fact distinct. 
A bout a dozen volunteers from the southern United States spent their vacation in Israel on a hands-on working tour, helping to paint and restore a floor of a centre for the handicapped in a religious neighborhood near Tel Aviv called Aleh.

The fact that Christians were invited at all to be a part of this work this summer was precedent setting.

“Bnai Brak is one of the most Orthodox areas in Tel Aviv, the centre is Orthodox and many of the children housed there come from Orthodox families,” said Michael Utterback, ICEJ Aliyah Director. “For them to open their doors to us Christians was very interesting, and that they would be willing to take us in there was a major step for this community.”

When asked by the organization for assistance, Utterback offered a practical assistance team. Ministry to Israel, a co-partner with the ICEJ, supplied the paint, tools and the repairs needed for the rooms they renovated - a floor of the building that hadn’t been repaired in 10 years.

The group was also able to mingle with the children. There are about 150 at the overcrowded school, 92 of the children live there full time.

The volunteers took this opportunity seriously and sensitively, eating outside to respect kosher laws, dressing modestly and gingerly building relationships over the few days they were there.

“The team went to the centre to just be servants, they were careful to show their Christian love rather than to just talk about it,” Utterback said.

At first the staff was polite, but reserved. They soon warmed up to the cheerful group and by the end of the time there, the staffers gave the group a letter of appreciation and a plaque. They left with tears and warm goodbyes.

Utterback said the trip was rewarding for the volunteers because they had done something as a prophetic act. Some have volunteered at the ICEJ Feast of Tabernacles for years, serving in that capacity. This was work of another nature.

“This was more personal, more like touching the people,” said Teresa Ward of Daytona, Florida.

The group, four of them older than 60, painted and cleaned, on the fourth floor of this hospital.

“It was my first trip out of the US,” said Douglas Priest of Ocala, Florida. “What I enjoyed was that it wasn’t just a sight-seeing tourist vacation, but being able to contribute to another person’s needs – that’s a reward to me.”

JSC volunteers take a small break to see Jerusalem during their work trip, repairing a centre for the handicapped near Tel Aviv.
Feast of Tabernacles

By Malcolm Hedding

The feast of Tabernacles, one of the three great pilgrim feasts of the Bible, has for a long time captured the imagination of Christians. This is so because it will be uniquely celebrated in the Messianic Age or Millennium and because it involves Gentiles from all over the world. The nations will go up year by year to Jerusalem to celebrate this Feast (Zechariah 14).

Naturally, it is celebrated year by year in Zion and involves the erection of flimsy booths that are then loosely covered with branches. For eight days, meals are eaten in these booths and the more serious celebrants may even sleep in them. Thankfully September and October in Israel are months that are still reasonably warm, but the evenings can be cool.

This reminds the Jewish people of their wilderness wanderings under the leadership of Moses. So, what are the lessons that we can all learn from this great Feast?

1. GOD LOVES THE WORLD

An additional item commanded and used in this celebration is the bundle of four species. Four types of trees representing four types of people in the world are uniquely chosen and held together. The tree types, represented by their branches, are palm, myrtle, willow and etrog.

The worshipper holds these together, turns to the four corners of the earth, and prays for the nations. The truth is simple and clear; there is one God, the God of the Bible, Who loves all the peoples of the world. Israel in fact became the means by which He brought his message of redemptive love to a fallen world. God said to Abraham, “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

2. GOD IS OUR JOY

The Feast of Tabernacles is a celebration of joy. This joy finds its source in the Word of God. On the Great Day of the Feast, the last day, the scrolls of the law are held high as the worshippers circle around them in dances of joy.

The lesson is clear: Real joy comes from having the Word of God firmly planted in your heart. James tells us to receive the Word implanted because it can save our souls (James 1:21).

For Christians this means two things:
1. Having the living word, Jesus, living in our hearts; and
2. Having the written word directing our ways and thoughts.

When this happens, joy is the product. A supernatural joy that sustains us, even in times of trial and persecution. No wonder Jesus said on the final great day of the Feast of Tabernacles, “If any man thirsts, let him come to me and out of his innermost being will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37).

3. GOD IS OUR PROVISION AND PROTECTION

The flimsy booths of the Feast of Tabernacles with their leafy roofs are a reminder that our provision and protection in life comes from a powerful God who loves to demonstrate His all-embracing care to those who love Him. This is a hard lesson to learn, but it remains nevertheless true.

The wilderness was a challenging environment to say the least. Moses led just over 1 million people into this hostile world. It must have looked like madness! How would they survive and what would they eat? The answer was clear: God Himself would provide and protect.

He would lead by fire and cloud and would provide by quail, manna and water. It took some time for them to learn this, but in the end they did.

We too are often faithless and eaten up with anxiety. Jesus said that our father cares for us just as He cares for and watches over the sparrow. The condition is: Seek first Him and His kingdom, and not “things” and then His care, provision and protection will be yours all the days of your life (Matthew 6:33).

4. GOD IS OUR FOCUS

The giants in the promised land were no surprise to God. He knew they would be there. In fact it is thought by scholars that they moved into the promised land at about the same time that the Israelites were leaving Egypt! So, they constituted more of a test than an obstacle or surprise. Why then did God plan such a strategy? To teach them that He is bigger than any giant! The wilderness wanderings with all its supernatural intervention on behalf of Israel, beginning with the defeat of Pharaoh’s army was designed to teach them this. They had to place their focus upon God. In this they failed and paid the price.

In this, too many Christians have failed and have and are paying the price! Scripture says, “If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things where Christ is” (Colossians 3:1). The writer of the book of Hebrews declares that we should keep looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). This is not an easy lesson to learn, but learn it we must. The giants are always smaller than our God.

For 25 years the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has sponsored the annual Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. As you ascend to Zion this year, think about the spiritual principles involved with this celebration and endeavour to make sure that they are entrenched in your life. To celebrate the Feast and to fail to learn the lessons of the Feast is to come short of all that God desires for you.
The Bible is clear about the fact that those nations that divide the land of Israel will incur the disfavour of God. So, the conflict now unfolding in Gaza has serious implications for all the world.

The land of Canaan belongs to God! He has bequeathed it to the Jewish people as an everlasting possession as part of His plan for world redemption. To meddle with that which God has given is a grave oversight. The nations must be warned and even though they happily discount the reality of the God of Heaven, they will soon hear from Him and are!

On the other hand, the prophets have always spoken to Israel about her spiritual condition. Her departure from serving the God of her forefathers has always led to judgment, anguish and trouble within her borders. In addition the God of the Bible has always warned Israel about making alliances with foreign nations that in the end bring her to a place of compromise and land forfeiture. Israel is called upon to trust God fully.

The present drama unfolding in Gaza is therefore complex and cannot be reduced to simplistic deductions.

As an organization that has a proven track record of standing with Israel, we do speak out today in the following way:

1) We are convinced that Israel is placing herself in grave and serious danger by the “Gaza pull-out.” We are not persuaded at all of the peaceful intentions of the Palestinian people. On the ground in Gaza, where the majority influence is Hamas, they unashamedly declare their desire to remove the Jews from what they call “Muslim soil.” They will most definitely continue their violent struggle from their new vantage point after disengagement. We fear that Kassam missiles will soon rain down on Ashdod and Ashkelon.

2) We affirm that all nations participating in the present process to divide the land will eventually fall into the hands of the living God. He has not changed and those nations like Assyria, Babylon and Rome that engaged in “this business” are now extinct. Why should it be different in the future?

3) We lovingly call upon Israel to call for a Day of Humility and Repentance. The God of the Bible has always

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For Zion’s sake we will not keep silent

ICEJ’s statement on the disengagement

By Malcolm Hedding

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1 “For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,
2 I will also gather all nations,
And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
And I will enter into judgment with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
They have also divided up My land.
3 They have cast lots for My people,
Have given a boy as payment for a harlot,
And sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.

Joel 3:1-3 (NKJV)
responded to Israel’s cry and will do so now. We will never tell Israel what to do. We respect her democracy, but we feel that we must urge Israelis to cast themselves upon the God who has borne them upon “eagles’ wings” for centuries. He will not fail Israel now. He will hear Israel’s cry when she calls upon Him with all her heart (2 Chronicles 7:14).

4) We urge the Church to come to a place of urgent and persistent prayer. Israel is in real danger. The avalanche of anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism in the world is alarming. Now is the time to rise up and pray.

Pray for Israel’s leaders, pray for wisdom, pray for deliverance and pray for Israel’s redemption. Please note that we have often stated that to pray for Israel without reference to her spiritual condition is to disconnect yourself from the purpose of God. God is dealing with Israel and in the end He will have His way with her.

5) We urge Christians everywhere to reject all forms of anti-Semitism and to pray for the Jewish communities of Gaza. These precious people were encouraged to settle in the region by a government that is now determined to remove them. Whatever the debate may be in Israel about this, the undeniable fact is that we are looking at a very real human tragedy. Men, women and children are being uprooted from their homes and familiar surroundings with very painful and traumatic consequences. They need our prayers and comfort.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is fully committed to the above position and always has been. We urge all our supporters to act now and help us fulfill our calling to be a light of love and comfort to Israel.

ICEJ APPEAL

Israel’s presence in Gaza and northern Samaria has come to an end and now 1,700 Jewish families are left in limbo. The world media has shown their tearful farewells, but the cameras will not stay around to follow their long road to recovery.

The ICEJ is appealing to our friends and supporters to help us assist these families, particularly the 2,500 school-age children who will adjust to new surroundings this fall.

The ICEJ is collecting donations to assist the children of the disengagement and meet their most urgent needs - material, educational, and psychological.

PLEASE DONATE TODAY!

You may use the attached response device to send in your donation.
Ghost towns of Gaza

The disengagement from Gaza was not supposed to happen this smoothly.

By David Parsons

A fter two years of heated debate and dire predictions of bloodshed, Israeli forces managed to evacuate all 21 Jewish communities in the Gaza Strip and four isolated settlements in northern Samaria in a little over a week with surprising proficiency. There were no mass refusals by soldiers; no nationwide traffic jams; and no deadly confrontations.

The forced evictions did not come without a price, however, as the thankless task exacted a high emotional toll on soldiers and settlers alike. After their ‘orange revolution’ failed to win over a majority of the nation, the Jewish residents of Gaza made last-minute attempts to dissuade sympathetic evacuation forces that touched off heartbreaking scenes – but did nothing to stop the pullouts.

There were several dramatic standoffs with the ‘hilltop youths’ – hundreds of hard-core young activists from Judea/Samaria who infiltrated several settlements to stage passionate protests in synagogues and on rooftops. The local residents, however, held tearful farewells and went without a fight – a “brave” and “responsible” move, according to IDF commanders that belied their demonised image in the international press.

“I’m very sad,” a woman from Nisanit recently told me. “I built my home with my own hands. First, I dreamed it in my head and then built it with my hands. It was hard to leave.”

The Palestinians, on the other hand, saw things differently. Boasting that their terror campaign had set the enemy to flight, Hamas claimed that the Gaza pullout marked “the beginning of the end of the Zionist dream in Palestine.”

“This is proof that the armed struggle has borne fruit,” insisted Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar, who joined in with top Palestinian Authority figures in vowing to “transfer the struggle to the West Bank and Jerusalem.”

Truth be told, the Gaza settlers survived all the Katyushas, roadside ambushes and suicide bombers that Hamas could throw at them; they just were not able to survive the determined leadership of Ariel Sharon.

In a televised address on the eve of disengagement, the Israeli prime minister spoke of his “great anguish” in ordering the abandonment of settlements he once championed. “We can’t hang on to Gaza forever where there are more than a million Palestinians who are doubling their numbers by the generation,” explained Sharon. “This plan is good for Israel... We are reducing the day-to-day friction and its victims on both sides.”

Days later, he deflected international calls to immediately evacuate more settlements in the West Bank, pledging that there would be no more unilateral disengagements and no further progress on the ‘roadmap’ until the Palestinians fulfil their initial obligations to disarm terror militias.

Indeed, Israel will need time to heal its deep wounds and adjust to the new post-disengagement reality, especially as 1,700 evacuated families seek to rebuild their lives from scratch. As the ghost towns of Gaza fall into Palestinian hands, some predict new elections soon. But Israel’s democracy has
already passed a stern test with extraordinary grace, whatever one thinks of disengagement.

STILL, the painful pullout from Gaza has provoked a crisis of faith among many in religious Zionist circles. Jews forcefully uprooted fellow Jews from their homes. A portion of Eretz Israel was voluntarily ceded to a hostile people. To some, it seems the very hope of Jewish redemption has suffered an irreversible setback.

These indeed are tragic and unprecedented developments. Yet from a faith perspective, there is thankfully no need for panic... unless one simply has grown impatient with the God of the Bible.

The Jewish people, after all, have been debating and dabling with such territorial compromises for decades. Under the British mandate, for instance, Zionist leaders entertained Arab demands for both the Negev and Haifa port in exchange for peace. Then in 1947, to secure an independent state to absorb 250,000 destitute Holocaust survivors, David Ben-Gurion accepted three disjointed wedges on barely half the Mandate territories.

More recently, the Oslo process represented yet another exercise in Israel essentially agreeing to divide the land.

Thus after 100 years, the Jewish people have managed to secure a place back in the land, but are still struggling to draw their national borders. One is left to ponder: Since God promised them the whole land, why has He not given it to them already? And why has He not intervened when they repeatedly agree to divide the land?

The answer lies in a paradoxical truth of Scripture: The same God who swore by an oath to give the land of Israel as an “everlasting possession” to Abraham’s descendants also swore that they would not enter His “rest” in the land when much of the nation remained in unbelief.

The miraculous modern-day Jewish return to the land of Israel is testimony to the faithfulness of God to His covenant with Abraham. Yet a holy God also placed conditions on their right to actually reside in all the land, as vouched for in the Mosaic law (see Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28).

No doubt we live in a time of restoration and favour upon Zion. God has been both faithful and merciful to bring His people back to the land as promised long ago and He will not fail them now, even if they do withdraw from parts of the land eternally bequeathed to them.

But the conditions for residency still apply, and thus the conflict over the land persists. While Amos 9:15 assures us Israel will never be uprooted or exiled again (i.e., the Arabs will never drive the Jews into the sea), the nation is not immune to “trouble in her borders.”

Thus you have to hand it to a people that, for the sake of the whole nation, left behind sunny homes and lives lovingly built in the harsh landscape of Gaza. What are the urbanites of Tel Aviv now willing to give up for Israel to reach her rest in God?

Ultimately, He is still in control. He is dealing with His people to bring them to their glorious national destiny, and He is setting up the nations for the ultimate and just judgment of God.
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