As Israelis prepare to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the nation’s rebirth in May 1948, many will think back longingly to a decade ago when the Jewish State marked fifty years of modern independence.

Those were heady days, when the Oslo process still filled many with hope that the long search for peace with their Arab neighbors was about to bear lasting fruit. In his keynote address at the official ceremonies for Israel’s 50th, then-US Vice President Al Gore struck heart chords with his reference to the Patriarch Jacob who – like Israel today – had to endure the “struggle within the dream.”

Indeed after two thousand years of exile culminated with the Holocaust, the Zionist movement’s objective of restoring the scattered Jewish people to their historic homeland in Eretz Israel still seemed like a distant dream. But it also was a noble dream whose time had come. And so the world held its breath on May 14, 1948 when provisional leader David Ben Gurion declared the founding of the new state of Israel on its ancient soil.

In its Declaration of Independence, he recited the religious, historical and moral bases for reconstituting the Jewish commonwealth. The vision was to revive a nation that in ages past had “created cultural values of national and universal significance, and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.”

“To build and be built,” vowed the early Zionist pioneers. The re-born Jewish State would seek to bring together the gifts and skills of a talented but battered people that – despite the millennia of wanderings – had still managed to “bless” the world in so many ways. Their collective energies could once again contribute so much more to the benefit of humanity.

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Dear Friends,

At this very special time in Israel’s history, as she celebrates 60 years of statehood, we dedicate this special edition of the Word From Jerusalem to saluting Israel as well as the work that the ICEJ and its many supporters worldwide have done to stand with her over the past twenty-eight years of our own existence.

The re-birth of national Israel enjoys clear biblical credentials and is testimony to God’s unfailing word and faithfulness. The nation was born in a day in the midst of conflict, and was strengthened by waves of Aliyah as Jews returned from the four corners of the world. All this happened against the “tide of history.” It was miraculous!

Those who love God’s Word were even able to predict, years beforehand, the second exodus from the former Soviet Union. The ICEJ, in the middle and late 1980s, initiated the “Mordechai Outcry” that called upon Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and other Kremlin leaders to let the Jews go! It was a call that came straight out of the book of Exodus, only in a modern-day context. Since then the ICEJ has witnessed the opening of the “Gates of Bronze” and assisted over 100,000 Jews to ascend to Zion.

We could go on and on listing the remarkable involvement of the vast constituency of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem in bringing comfort to the restored nation of Israel since our own founding in 1980.

The ICEJ opened its doors that year in solidarity with Israel’s decision to declare re-united Jerusalem its eternal and undivided capital. We still stand by Israel today in this regard, while at the same time fighting anti-Semitism, and exposing the nature of radical Islam and its relentless assault on the Jewish State.

We also have brought practical help to the poor and feeble within the nation. In short, we comfort Israel and express this mandate in many ways, but also through our annual Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. This colorful event, with its famous participation in the Jerusalem March, has brought hope and comfort to the nation’s capital in a very tangible way.

For this latter half of Israel’s contemporary history, we have stood beside her, in words but even more so in deeds.

Today Israel knows that she is not alone. On behalf of our vast worldwide constituency, National Directors, Board and Association members, I congratulate Israel on this achievement and assure the people of Israel that we will be there beside her in all her tomorrows!

Mazel Tov!

Rev. Malcolm Hedding
ICEJ Executive Director
Since 1980, through highs and lows, joys and sadness, the ICEJ has been the face and hands of Christian love for Israel. No matter what the occasion – from feast celebrations to tragedy and conflict, our staff have been there on a daily basis assisting both the Jews and Arabs of the Land at their point of need. Our practical assistance arm, ICEJ AID, has built lifelong relationships with social workers and charities and touched communities in every corner of the Holy Land. We are here to say Christians care!

We were there when ‘the North gave up’ its Jews and they flooded home to Israel. Soviet Jewish immigrants stood in long lines to receive care packages from ICEJ staff.

When Iraqi Scud missiles struck the Tel Aviv area during the Gulf War, we were first on the scene with emergency kits for 5,000 suddenly homeless Israelis.

We were there with open arms and Amharic-speaking medical staff to greet Ethiopians dramatically airlifted home to Israel.

We were there when Israelis faced the onslaught of suicide terrorism in the 2nd intifada. Our visits and financial support brought encouragement to the victims of terror whose lives were changed forever.

We offered relief to the Jewish families evacuated from Gaza during the 2005 Disengagement, by building playgrounds and donating school bags for the dislocated children.

When northern Israel was inundated with rockets in from Lebanon, we were there to provide food for needy families and recreational escapes for children stuck in bomb shelters for weeks on end.

We are bringing gifts, hope and support to the residents of Sderot and other Negev towns battered by daily Kassam rocket attacks from Gaza.

Give the People of Israel a Life-Changing Birthday Gift this May...
Make a 60th Anniversary Donation to Support the Ongoing Work & Witness of the ICEJ.
The Feast of Tabernacles

BY MALCOLM HEDDING

In 1980 the founders of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, which included among others, Jan Willem van der Hoeven, Merv and Merla Watson, and George Giacumakis, were enabled by the grace and unction of God to express the desire of Christians to bless and comfort Israel in a tangible way. This was the biblical Feast of Tabernacles celebration for Christians.

The nature and occasions of this great pilgrimage Feast is mentioned in the books of Moses, throughout Hebrew scripture and into the New Covenant. The prophet Zechariah points to a future day when all the nations will ascend to Jerusalem to celebrate this annual festival (Zechariah 14:16-21; see also Leviticus 23:33-43; Nehemiah 8:13-18; John 7:37-39).

For those early pioneers of the ICEJ, this became a point or moment of Holy Spirit inspiration. Thus some 800 pilgrims gathered on the grounds of the Anglican School in Jerusalem in September 1980 to celebrate the Feast and express their solidarity with Israel.

For those early pioneers of the ICEJ, this became a point or moment of Holy Spirit inspiration. Thus some 800 pilgrims gathered on the grounds of the Anglican School in Jerusalem in September 1980 to celebrate the Feast and express their solidarity with Israel.

From that time to the present, the Feast became an ‘explosion’ of praise and worship, awakening the Christian world to Davidic worship and creative aspects of music, movement and dance all inspired by the Scriptures. It also became a platform for biblical exposition on what it means to support and stand with Israel, and quickly attracted the attendance of successive Israeli prime ministers and other notable speakers.

It thus grew from 800 to near on 8,000 participants at one stage, and by virtue of its biblical injunction brought together Jews and Christians in the most joyful manner.

For its initial twenty years the Feast was overseen by Johann Luckhoff, the ICEJ’s first Executive Director, and today it continues to enthrall pilgrims with the biblically rooted idea that God Himself is the protector of Israel and of our lives. Therefore we can dwell in flimsy, leafy booths knowing full well that “He Who watches over Israel neither slumbers or sleeps” (Psalm 121:4).

This year’s Feast of Tabernacles celebration has as its theme “The Lion of Judah”. Once again we will ascend to God’s holy hill and declare to Israel that she is loved by evangelical Christians from all over the world. Find out more online at: www.icejusa.org/feast.

Don’t miss it!! 🎉

Tour Israel during the Feast of Tabernacles

October 10 - 24, 2008

Call Toll Free for Details: 1-866-393-5890

www.icejusa.org/tour
I made my first pilgrimage to Israel in 1970. I was a sixth grader when my parents announced they were taking my brother and me on a trip to the “Holy Land.” Those days in the land changed my life. Years later my brother and I returned to study at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The streets of Jerusalem and the land of Israel have become a significant part of our lives and spiritual journey.

I have continued to travel to Israel through the years and the various conflicts. For the past several years we have organized summer pilgrimages to Israel. Each time I extend the invitation the responses are the same: “Pastor we would love to travel to the land of Israel, but we are afraid.” The single greatest obstacle most people face when considering the journey is not the difficulty of travel, the physical demands of the trip or even the cost - it is the concern for safety.

Most of us are limited in our understanding of the Middle East to what we have gleaned from the media outlets. Unfortunately, violence in Jerusalem is of global interest. We receive a steady stream of highly politicized information regarding conflict in Israel. The result of this, understandably, is a great deal of apprehension in the hearts of persons considering travel to Israel.

My contribution to the spiritual development of those who travel is not primarily the impartation of Biblical insight or explaining the history of the sites visited - it is providing a steady, calm voice of assurance that a pilgrimage to Israel is not only safe, it is a transformational journey. Typically, we depart with a group of anxious pilgrims and within seventy-two hours they are transformed into a confident group of inquisitive, picture-taking adventurers.

The reality is that tourism is a great benefit to the citizens of Israel, both Jewish and Arab. There is a great deal of effort made to assure that those traveling to the Holy Land are welcomed and provided an opportunity to experience “the land.”

As we load the buses to depart Jerusalem and begin our journey home, the group of people who a few days earlier were filled with anxiety often begin to plan their return to Israel, typically with tears in their eyes. In a few short days they have sailed on the Sea of Galilee, climbed the Golan Heights, floated in the Dead Sea, bartered in the bazaars of the Old City of Jerusalem - their minds are filled with new information, their hearts with a love for the land and it’s people and they have gained spiritual insight which will enrich their lives for years to come.

G. Allen Jackson is the Senior Pastor of World Outreach Church in Murfreesboro, TN. He is a regular speaker at the annual Feast of Tabernacles Celebration in Jerusalem, and serves on the Board of Directors of the ICEJ’s US Branch.
Christian support for Israel is not a new phenomenon, but is as old as the church itself. The New Testament tells us how the new Gentile churches in Greece, Asia Minor and Rome were specifically instructed to bless their Jewish brethren. The Apostle Paul gives the Roman church a powerful motivation why Christians should support Israel. “For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings” (Romans 15:27).

In many of his letters and wherever he went, Paul admonished the saints to never forget to return the blessings they had received from the Jews. He devotes an entire chapter in 2 Corinthians to this, and mentions this practice in the churches of Achaia, Macedonia, Greece and Rome.

It is therefore no surprise that many revival movements, both pre and post-Reformation, understood the Jewish roots of their faith and felt a heart attachment to the Jews, wanting to bless them and even foreseeing the future restoration of Israel as a nation.

Down throughout the centuries, such early ‘awakenings’ as the French Valdese, the Huguenots, German Pietism or the British Puritans were united in their love for the Chosen People. This, of course, contrasted with the Replacement teachings and anti-Semitic sentiments prevalent in most of the established churches, and so these new philo-Semitic streams often faced stiff opposition. Some even had to pay with their lives. In 1587 a man named Francis Kett was burned alive for expressing his belief that the Bible prophesied the return of the Jews to their Land.

But the teaching of God’s faithfulness to natural Israel remained bright in many Protestant circles. In 1607, Thomas Brightman stated in his book “Revelation of the Revelation” that the restoration of the Jews to Israel is most certain, since “the prophets do everywhere confirm it.”

The founder of the Methodist Church, John Wesley, writes a century later: “So many prophecies refer to this grand event [of the restoration of the Jews], that it is surprising any Christian can doubt of it. And these are greatly confirmed by the wonderful preservation of the Jews as a distinct people to this day. When it is accomplished, it will be so strong a demonstration, both of the Old and New Testament revelation...”

The English theologian Charles H. Spurgeon declared in a Sunday sermon in 1855 that, “I think we do not attach sufficient importance to the restoration of the Jews. We do not think enough of it. But certainly, if there is anything promised in the Bible it is this. I imagine that you cannot read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is to be an actual restoration of the children of Israel... May that happy day soon come!”

It therefore of no surprise that from the rise of Zionist movement in the late 19th century, devout Christians have stood alongside the Jewish people to help and support their re-establishment in Eretz Israel. William Hechler, Lord Balfour and Orde Wingate are just a few examples of Christian ministers, politicians and men in uniform who stood uncompromisingly alongside the Jewish people in the years before and after the modern rebirth of the State of Israel. They were not merely friends of the Jews, but full partners in fulfilling His eternal promises to re-gather His beloved people.

Therefore, Christian Zionism is not a new stream nor do we teach a novel doctrine, but we follow in the footsteps of an ancient and noble tradition. Rooted in this Protestant and Evangelical heritage, the ICEJ has been discharging its ministry of comforting the Jewish people for 28 years now. We invite you on this 60th anniversary of Israel to join our efforts as never before!

Dr. Jürgen Bühler serves as International Director of the ICEJ
The biblical story of God’s redemptive purpose begins in Genesis 12. The previous chapters well document the fall of humankind and its plunge away from God toward destruction and a lost eternity. But then Genesis 12 becomes a watershed in history because it documents God’s movement toward humanity in order to ‘fix it’ and recover it from sin.

The call of Abraham and thereby the nation of Israel become crucial and central to this redemptive initiative. She would become the ‘vehicle of world redemption’; that is, the means by which God speaks to and reaches out to a fallen world (Romans 3:1-2; Romans 9:1-5).

As a consequence of God’s call, Abraham ventured forth to a land promised to him - the Land of Canaan. Here in this unique country and by its special nature, which scripture calls the glory of all nations (Ezekiel 20:15), the nation of Israel found its identity as the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 50:10), and as God’s birthing means for saving humanity. This same nation also encountered the anger of those who hate God, as well as unseen, supernatural and evil entity.

The nature of the contest was clear: Destroy Israel and you will destroy the very purpose of God. “Salvation is of the Jews”, Jesus says in John 4:22, thus destruction of the Jew is seen as desirable so as to frustrate this eternal plan.

Sadly, history is littered with successive attempts to achieve the latter aim. However, since the guarantor of Israel’s survival is God Himself, the eternal purpose of God was not frustrated in spite of Israel’s sin and the repeated attempts to liquidate her. She is and remains the “apple of His eye” (Zechariah 2:8).

More important still is the fact that through her long journey she was enabled, with God’s help, to give us great men of God, prophets and apostles and our wonderful Messiah Jesus, Who has transformed our lives and those of millions from our world.

Israel has always enjoyed a divine call to be God’s mouthpiece to the world. Her failures have all been noted by the major and minor prophets, but so too is her promise – given by God – of a glorious and blessed future. What else does Isaiah 2:1-4 mean? Today, as of old, she is under continual attack. Nothing has changed, except that now she has a ‘family’ in all corners of the earth that understand her unique place back in the Land of Israel. At the same time, we recognize that Israel’s election was for the sake of the world, in that God loves all people the same (John 3:16).

It is amazing that the redemptive purpose of God has always been shackled to Israel’s weakness and pilgrimage through history and yet it has been successful. All this points to the faithfulness of God and the veracity of His Word.

Today, Israel has returned to Zion a proud, strong people yet she is still plagued with enemies determined to destroy her. Christians support her, stand beside her, comfort her and pray for her because God calls us to do so and because we are mindful of the many blessings that are ours because of her. We share in “their” (Israel’s) spiritual things, says Romans 15:27. Surely, as God Himself walks with her in the last lap of her great pilgrimage, we can stand beside her until, as the prophet Ezekiel puts it, God gives her “a new heart and puts a new spirit within her!” (Ezekiel 36:26).

Israel’s modern-day restoration is thus not an accident of history but evidence of the call and promise that God gave in Abraham and his natural descendants some 4,000 years ago. This is incredible and can only point to the blessing of God. We support what God commands and blesses!
Pursuing this dream, the small but determined nation of Israel has produced scientific, medical and technological advances far beyond her size and natural resources.

Innovative agricultural techniques have reclaimed wastelands and caused the desert to blossom like a rose (Isaiah 35:1). In more recent times, she has been at the cutting edge of the high-tech revolution, and drawn some of the largest global companies to open research and development branches here that are vital to their competitive success. Once again, Israel is inspiring the world.

Within this dream, however, there is a difficult struggle. In its first three decades, Israel faced an existential threat from conventional Arab armies, fueled largely by the ideology of pan-Arab nationalism, as championed by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. This militantly secular ideology held that the Arab nations were actually one language, culture, land and people that had been artificially carved up by the Western powers in the wake of the two great wars of the 20th Century. The Zionist movement in particular had planted an alien entity in the heart of this pan-Arab nation, effectively splitting it in two. It was a ‘cancer’ that had to be forcefully removed for the Arab peoples to realize their own destiny, and a series of wars were launched to that end.

Yet a young and vulnerable Israel somehow mustered the strength to withstand the onslaughts. Each time – in 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 – the IDF took the battle to enemy territory and away from the country’s civilian population. Its bold military doctrine demanded that the commanders lead the citizen army into the front lines. Ordinary men like Moshe Dayan and Ariel Sharon became living legends. Some Arab states like Egypt and Jordan finally realized they could not defeat Israel on the battlefield and decided to make peace with her.

But then a new and even greater peril to Israel’s existence emerged. Over the past 30 years, the nation has faced the scourge of suicide terrorism and the growing threat of missile arsenals potentially armed with weapons of mass destruction. The new ideology driving her adversaries is radical Islamism, which preaches the unity of the same Arabic peoples but under a religious banner promising a new ‘Golden Age’ for Islam that will be heralded by the eradication of the same ‘cancerous’ Israel.

How well Israel confronts this daunting challenge will affect her own course as well as the entire world in the years to come. Her people have proven resilient and resourceful. They are being forced to live in a bubble of security barriers and anti-missile defence systems, but still the dream carries them onward. We can take encouragement that the Bible promises the destiny of this long journey is not Israel’s annihilation, but rather her ultimate redemption in God.

David Parsons serves as ICEJ Media Director in Jerusalem and Contributing Christian Editor of ‘The Jerusalem Post Christian Edition’