Isolating Israel

“Come,” they say, “let us destroy them as a nation” - Psalm 83: 4

REV. MALCOLM HEDDING

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Isolating Israel

SOLUTION. As 2010 ends it is a word mentioned often in connection with Israel. This summer’s Flotilla incident, which had more to do with an anti-Israel agenda than with humanitarian aid for the beleaguered residents of Gaza, has empowered the anti-Israel left and enabled them to make increased calls for her to be isolated. The enemies of Israel have used this incident to further broaden out their attack at every level. They are sadly supported by much of the global press and the ever-vocal radical political left.

As a consequence, labor unions in many parts of the world are refusing to off-load ships with Israeli products onboard while historical Church movements such as Presbyterians, Anglicans and Lutherans are intensifying their calls for disinvestment in companies doing business with Israel.

This “attack” is so widespread, sustained and sadly effective that the “average Joe” everywhere is buying into it or, because of pressure and intimidation, giving in to it. The result is that organizations that stand with Israel, like the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, are being branded as misguided and viewed with increasing suspicion.

This is the climate in which we now operate. In short there is a sustained campaign to delegitimize and dismantle Israel and those who defend her are targeted in the same way.

However, we are not moved or persuaded by public opinion but by the Word of the living God. We are thus convinced that Israel’s modern day restoration is not a political coincidence but rather evidence of God’s faithfulness to His word and promise made to Abraham some 4,000 years ago. We will stand firm in our support of Israel and her right to exist in and enjoy the land that God forever gave her (Genesis 17:7-8). This includes proclaiming that Jerusalem is and should remain the undivided eternal capital of the Jewish people. Israel’s claims in this regard are beyond dispute.

The campaign to delegitimize Israel has made strange bedfellows of radical Muslims and radical leftists. Islam’s well-documented abuse of women, honor killings, execution of those from its ranks who convert to other religions, and agenda to introduce Sharia Law stand in blatant opposition to the ‘progressive’ thinking of the left. So, why would they turn a blind eye or tolerate such blatant contradictions of their philosophical world-view? The answer is simple; they unite with radical Islam in their hatred of Israel and desire to see her removed from the Middle East.

>> CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE
Dear Friends,

As we approach the Jewish festival of Hanukkah we are reminded of the miraculous events that led to the liberation of Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple. Jesus observed the holiday (John 10: 22-23) and knew that His Father in Heaven had once again “rescued” Jerusalem. Sadly, he also foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 yet equally spoke of its return to Jewish sovereignty before the end of the age (Luke 21:20-24).

This return was also a miracle, as in November 1917 British General Edmund Allenby liberated Jerusalem on the first day of Hanukkah. This enabled the British Government to issue the Balfour Declaration which eventually led to the restoration of the Jewish State. Of course, in 1967 a fuller liberation of Jerusalem came, bringing the divided city together again under Israeli sovereignty.

Today, Jerusalem is once more under threat. The Bible has spoken about this, too. However, if Hanukkah tells us one thing, it is that the God of the Bible is not disconnected from the city. In the end it will experience a political, social and spiritual liberation that will make it “a praise in the earth.” Prayer will bring this day closer.

It is appropriate therefore that at this time of the year we celebrate Jesus’ birth. He, too, is the Light of God coming into the world; a Light that has crossed the shores of the world and brought with it joy and salvation. The incarnation is admittedly a mystery, but a wonderful one. No wonder angels sang over Bethlehem the night Jesus was born and a star gave heavenly direction.

We also pause to celebrate the good things that our Heavenly Father has done for us and through us in 2010. In January we were able to respond to an urgent appeal to help fund Israeli search-and-rescue efforts in the earthquake ravaged Caribbean nation of Haiti. In April, we dedicated the first phase of a unique assisted-living facility for elderly Holocaust survivors in the northern Israeli city of Haifa, and in September we celebrated the 30th anniversary of our ministry at the annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem!

As we ponder these things in our hearts, may we all be filled with light!

In Jesus,

Rev. Malcolm Hedding
ICEJ Executive Director
ICEJ Events
Seminars, Tours & Conferences
USA & Israel, 2010

Conferences & Solidarity Events
Nonie Darwish, an Egyptian-born critic of Sharia law, joined the ICEJ Executive Director Malcolm Hedding and Pastor Allen Jackson at our second annual Spring Teaching Conference in May, impacting more than 6,000 people in the greater Nashville area with her testimony of escaping radical Islam and coming to faith in Christ. In Washington DC, US Branch Director Susan Michael spoke alongside Ambassador Michael Oren at the Embassy of Israel’s annual solidarity event and addressed delegates at the AIPAC policy conference. Elsewhere, Media Director Michael Hines spoke at a farewell gathering for Belaynesh Zevadia, Israel’s Ethiopian-born Deputy Consul-General to the Southwest, at a dinner in Houston in July.

Seminars & Speaking Tours
Our passion is to see Christians grow deeper in their knowledge of God’s enduring faithfulness to the Jewish people; to develop a love for His Word and His world. 2010, therefore, saw the expansion of the ICEJ Saturday Seminar series to include Understanding Israel and Islam in America - two additional initiatives designed to challenge and inspire Christians to grasp God’s purposes in these days. Together with a wide variety of speaking engagements in church services, synagogues and conferences, ICEJ speakers reached thousands of people in more than a dozen states from New Mexico to Michigan. We intend to redouble our efforts in the year ahead. If we missed you this year, why not invite us to your community in 2011?

Feast of Tabernacles
The 2010 Christian Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles marked the 30th anniversary of the founding of the ICEJ. Taking the theme, Jerusalem, A Praise in the Earth, pilgrims from some 80 nations flocked to Israel to receive a powerful challenge to recommit themselves to the task of the Great Commission. Special guests included Reinhard Bonnke, a man who has seen over 65 million people come to faith in Christ in Africa. People across the world were able to experience Rev. Bonnke’s love for Israel and passion for the lost thanks to our live streaming partnership with Visjon Norge which enabled this year’s Feast to reach over 100,000 homes in Europe, the US and beyond.

Invite an ICEJ Seminar or Speaker to your local church in 2011!
Call Teresa for more details on: (615) 895-9830
Rapid Response
On January 13, in the hours following the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that devastated the Caribbean nation of Haiti, a highly trained Israeli rapid response team had just finished a grueling 18-hour recovery operation at the scene of a fatal helicopter crash in a deep forest ravine outside Mexico City. “We were the closest ones” said Dovie Maisel from the ZAKA international rescue unit which was among the first on the ground in Port-au-Prince. “We were there almost alone.”

Plea for Help
As the Israeli rescue team landed in the earthquake zone, the ZAKA leadership placed an urgent phone call to ICEJ Director Malcolm Hedding asking the Embassy to partner with them in their search-and-rescue operations in Haiti.

In the grueling 38-hour operation that followed, Maisel and his team managed to free eight students in a collapsed multi-story university building. It was a rescue effort underwritten by the generosity of ICEJ donors around the world.

Within hours ZAKA paramedics arrived in Port-au-Prince as part of a 200-strong delegation from the IDF, MagenDavid Adom and IsraAID. As the donations kept flowing, the Israeli rescue contingent earned worldwide praise for their heroic efforts. The IDF mobile field hospital was hailed as the only foreign aid mission able to do complex surgical operations in the disaster zone and one young woman whose life was saved during childbirth named her new-born son “Israel” in gratitude.

Breaking down Walls
“Cracked floors, collapsing walls and crumbling furniture” - that’s how Rabbi Ze’ev Slavin described the art studio in the school for orphaned and abused boys that he runs in the Israeli town of Kfar Chabad, just outside Tel Aviv. Called Or v’Simcha (Light & Joy), this orthodox Jewish boarding school is home to some 340 boys in need of great care and healing. Some have fathers in jail, others are there because of violence in the home. Still others come from impoverished or homeless families.

The art studio project was launched during last year’s Feast of Tabernacles celebration when ICEJ AID brought 50 Feast pilgrims to the school to meet the boys and to tear down a dilapidated wall to prepare for the renovations. It is just one of dozens of similar projects that have impacted thousands of Israeli lives this year.

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“We were very grateful to meet the ICEJ,” recalled Rabbi Slavin at the studio dedication in Spring. “It was just unbelievable when you came in with sledgehammers and literally broke down the wall!” Now, says the Rabbi, “Everything is brand new!”

Provision for Passover
Despite the resilience of the Israeli economy in the midst of a global recession, many are unable to afford basic necessities during Passover. This year, ICEJ AID delivered holiday help from Dimona in the South to Karmiel in the North, touching struggling families, needy immigrants, the disabled and those suffering from mental illness. This year, we also had the privilege of blessing nearly 100 elderly Holocaust survivors across the country with holiday food baskets and Seder meals.
April saw the leadership of the Christian Embassy take part in the dedication of a new home for Holocaust survivors in the northern coastal city of Haifa. Opposition Leader Tzipi Livni and Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger attended the dedication which marked the completion of the first phase of extensive renovations. Spearheaded by the ICEJ’s German Branch, the Haifa Home demonstrates our commitment to help the estimated 210,000 Holocaust survivors in Israel end their days in dignity.

**A Model Care Facility**

Able to house up to 80 survivors, the ICEJ-sponsored Haifa Home is today considered a model in dealing with the growing national problem of poor and needy survivors of the Shoah. Residents receive free lodging, food and medical care, with doctors and nurses from area hospitals volunteering to cover their health needs around-the-clock. The kitchen is also feeding other Holocaust survivors who live in the area. Yet, more than 2,000 remain on the waiting list.

That’s why, at the opening ceremony for the enlarged facility in September, the ICEJ contributed an additional $300,000 to purchase a second three-story building on the same street, which will be able to house another 50 survivors from the current waiting list. “We cannot bring back the countless victims of the Nazi genocide against the Jews of Europe,” said ICEJ International Director Jürgen Bühler. “But we can bring some comfort and relief to those still with us who suffered greatly in that dark time and even to this day.”

**Ethiopian Jews**

Making aliyah has been fraught with difficulties for Ethiopian Jews, many of whom fled their famine-ravaged homeland in the early 1980s by trekking across Africa’s Nubian Desert on foot. It was a journey that saw only 2 out of 3 make it to Israel alive. This year ICEJ AID has been focusing on the needs of this unique community: increasing educational opportunities for young Ethiopians on one hand while assisting the older generations deal with the painful memories of their journey nearly 30 years ago.

This year, we have partnered with the Ruppin Academic Center near Netanya to enable more second-generation immigrants to gain higher education qualifications, supported a successful after-school program in Bet Shemesh that provides a safe place for at-risk Ethiopian teens and we’ve continued to support the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma at Herzog Hospital as it seeks to assist an older generation come to terms with the trauma of their historic, yet painful desert journey. None of this would have been possible without your faithful support.

**Grafted ‘Hands on’ Tour**

Young adults from 13 different nations converged on Israel in July to learn about modern Israel, and engage in practical ‘hands-on’ acts of service. Projects included painting the house of a young Russian mother who escaped from a human-trafficking gang, playing with Sudanese refugee children at a women’s shelter in Haifa and cleaning trash in the Arab Quarter of Jerusalem’s Old City. The ICEJ’s ‘Grafted’ team left having had a life-changing encounter with Israel and her God.
ICEJ Advocacy
Promoting Justice, Speaking Truth

Gaza Flotilla
On May 31, Israeli commandos intercepted a flotilla of ships attempting to break the Gaza sea blockade and deliver aid directly to Hamas. What they encountered onboard was a mob of jihadist activists determined to reach Gaza or be martyred in combat on the way. The standoff left nine Turkish combatants dead, and seven Israeli soldiers wounded, triggering widespread media condemnation and angry demonstrations in cities across the globe.

The ICEJ’s network of national branches quickly responded to the crisis, supporting the embattled Jewish community by defending Israel’s actions with press statements and video reports supplied by the ICEJ News team in Jerusalem. In Norway, over 4,000 ICEJ supporters gathered in a solidarity rally in Oslo, while similar counter-protests were held in the Philippines, Finland and Ireland.

Israel Defense Network
Israel is currently facing an unprecedented campaign of delegitimization. The boycott, sanctions and divestment movement is at the forefront of a concerted effort by pro-Palestinian activists, trade unionists, neo-Marxist groups and mainline denominations to combat the perceived US political bias towards Israel.

That’s why in late 2010 the ICEJ launched the Israel Defense Network, a mechanism through which pro-Israel Christians can be empowered to stand against the tide and make the case for Israel in the local church and the wider community. Using a wide range of online tools, the Defense Network will enable quick dissemination of talking points, blog posts, audio downloads, Bible studies and news analysis. The network will be spearheaded by in-depth discussions of key issues on our regular web-based TV program, Middle East Digest.

Holocaust Education
2010 saw the inauguration of the first Christian Leadership Conference at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, an event that was timed to coincide with Israel’s annual Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Memorial Day). Convened in partnership with the ICEJ and with funding provided by the Embassy’s German Branch, the gathering enabled 23 pastors and ministry leaders from 8 nations to examine the legacy of the Holocaust, and the resurgence of global anti-Semitism.

“The danger [of rising anti-Semitism] is real for the whole Middle East,” warned Dr. Bahjat Batarseh, a Jordanian evangelist who has ministered in 130 countries - one of the participants most impacted by the April leadership conference. “And we need to take it seriously, not only to speak about it again, but to pray and trust God.”

Standing Against the Tide
The ICEJ is called to stand against the rising tide of hostility that threatens the nation of Israel and the Jewish community worldwide. Whether it is our strategic partnership with Yad Vashem aimed at helping Christians better understand the roots of the Nazi Holocaust; the launch of the Israel Defense Network or simply speaking out against the world’s shameful response to the Gaza Flotilla incident in May, the ICEJ is committed to standing against the hatred and injustice that is directed at Israel. We do this all in the name of Christ, on your behalf and thanks to your faithful prayers and generous financial support.
ICEJ Aliyah Program Doubles

In response to the surge in aliyah to Israel over the past two years, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem this year doubled our sponsorship of Jews returning to their ancient homeland.

The lingering worldwide economic downturn, together with a troubling wave of anti-Semitism, has led to an increase in Jews coming home to Israel. To keep up with demand, the ICEJ has expanded its aliyah flights program and continued to help sponsor the Jewish Agency’s innovative Red Carpet welcomes for newcomers arriving in the land. This has meant that our aliyah operations have increased more than 100% over the last year.

With aliyah worldwide on the rise for a second consecutive year, the ICEJ has been assisting not only Russian Jews, but also French Jews, Swedish Jews, South African Jews and Latino Jews as well. We helped nearly 1,500 Jews come home in 2009, but that figure will come to more than 3,000 for the year 2010.

Likewise, the ICEJ in 2010 has doubled the number of returnees which we have sponsored through the Red Carpet program, compared with last year. This initiative is a fast-track absorption program which enables new arrivals to complete most of their immigration paperwork within 24 hours of touching down at Ben-Gurion Airport. The program includes linking arrivals with olim from their same country, as well as special travel and hospitality arrangements.

In another area, ICEJ-Finland and the Finnish Exodus Committee have very generously offered to assume all the costs for Russia returnees who travel to Israel via Helsinki – a route that has operated since the fall of Soviet communism in 1989. This included three flights in 2010 – in May, October and November.

Other ICEJ aliyah flights have been coming from Sweden and Russia, with nearly 600 passengers sponsored over recent months. An extra baggage fee is also provided allowing up to 75 kilos per person, which proves very helpful in moving entire families to Israel.

Other new programs include the aliyah work of ICEJ-Sweden, led by national director Anki Backmark. Last month also marked the start of a new Aliyah program in Latvia which will be under the direction of ICEJ representative Ilze Saulite. Aliyah is rising in Latvia due to the economic crisis there and more help is needed to bring Jewish families to the airport.

In December, the ICEJ will also sponsor a flight from France, where many in this large Jewish community are starting to come home. Radical Muslim agitation is one driving factor in their decision, as well as the strengthening economy in Israel and the opportunity to live a Jewish life openly.

Please join with us to help meet the increased needs of our Aliyah operations.
So, what could be at the root of this mad hatred? Only one thing, anti-Semitism! The hatred of things Jewish is an old deadly malady of the human heart that is so intense that it will unite the most unlikely groups and people. This is a disease of choice. It is not a sickness but a deliberate decision to persecute, hound and destroy Jews. It involves people of all stations of life and thus is not a respecter of persons.

The new target of those filled with this hatred is the “corporate Jew” or Israel. By this means they disavow anti-Semitism and affirm that their attack against Israel is legitimate because of political concerns. This is the big lie! These people hate all things Jewish, they propagate the age old lies of the ‘Protocols of the Elders Zion’ and buy into anything that denies the Holocaust and they will not stop until they have achieved their goals.

Their narrative denies history, twists the truth and even denies any Jewish connection to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Nevertheless, the liberal left marches hand-in-hand with them!

Meanwhile, smelling weakness in the American Administration, Ahmadinejad of Iran has stepped up his war against the Jews by prompting Hezbollah into armed conflict with Israel on her northern border. On the web he has initiated a new project that by the use of cartoons denies the Holocaust. The message is clear; though the Jews have never yet been exterminated despite countless historical attempts - they now deserve it! When will the madness stop and who will step up to oppose it?

Malcolm Hedding serves as ICEJ Executive Director in Jerusalem