Feast pilgrims express solidarity with the nation of Israel

The 2011 Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, proved to be a very timely solidarity mission to Israel.

More than 5,000 Christians from some 80 nations paraded through the center of Jerusalem on the last day of the week-long Feast in October, at the very moment that Israel was welcoming IDF soldier Gilad Schalit home after five gruelling years of captivity in Gaza.

Seated on the official viewing stand outside the King David hotel, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat was among the tens of thousands of Israelis lining the streets to greet the Feast pilgrims and witness the impressive display of Christian love.

Mayor Barkat relished his role as parade marshal, diving into the multi-cultural stream of pilgrims on several occasions to shake hands and embrace his city’s visitors from around the globe.

When the lead banner of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem passed by, he jumped to his feet once again and marched alongside it to the roaring approval of Christians and Israelis alike.

A number of pilgrims were holding signs which said, “Welcome home Gilad” and “Israel is not alone.” Others handed out small national flags, candy and other gifts to smiling children.

“We are so grateful about Gilad Schalit’s release! It’s been a prayer that has been going on for a long time and we are so thankful. That’s fabulous news during this great week,” exclaimed Shay Kasper, a Feast pilgrim from Los Angeles, California.

“All the Jerusalem marches have been wonderful. We see more and more love going from both sides, from the Christians and the Israelis together,” added Kasper, who has attended every Feast since 1981.

“It was good for our Feast pilgrims from around the world to be here to express our solidarity on such a momentous day, as they also experienced first-hand what Israel was going through as Gilad Schalit returned home,” said ICEJ Executive Director Dr. Juergen Buehler. “Our pilgrims will no doubt return to their own nations with a deeper appreciation of Israel’s unique challenges and an even stronger commitment to standing with the Jewish state and people.”

News of a deal for Schalit’s release broke just as Feast pilgrims were arriving in Jerusalem for the annual ICEJ gathering. It meant that while the 25-year old soldier was finally reunited with his family, Israel had to set free over 1,000 Palestinian prisoners in exchange. Israeli Supreme Court President, Dorit Beinish,
ICEJ Women’s Study Tour: Poland & Israel
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Dust and Stones

It’s time to regain your sense of wonder

By Michael Hines

It all begins with a confession. My wife Bonni and I lived in Jerusalem for over five years and yet, in all that time, we never participated in an Israel tour.

We hosted several tour groups in our apartment and took the kids on day trips to the waterfalls at Ein Gedi; we knew the best place in the city to buy diapers and the price of chicken in the Shouk; and yet we’d never climbed Masada, or peeked into the caves of Qumran; or waded in the waters of the lower Jordan or explored the ruins of Tel Dan.

I’d always heard people speak of how visiting Israel changed their life. I couldn’t agree more. After all, we’d lived through a couple of wars and an intifada. Jerusalem truly changed ours.

Yet, nothing prepared us for the experience of joining the 2011 Feast of Tabernacles Tour; encountering the ‘Promised Land’ through the eyes of those who had never set foot there before; those for whom the journey itself was a lifelong dream come true.

Cynicism isn’t just the disease of the young. All of us who labor on behalf of Israel have the tendency to lose our sense of wonder at some point along the journey. We find ourselves detached from the miracle of stepping back in time across the pages of history and meeting the One that stilled the storm on the Galilee.

“Thank you for your prayer-filled devotional meditations and the truth of God’s word proclaimed to us pilgrims – not so much at the “designated areas” along our tour route, but reaching into areas of our hearts previously “occupied territories” now freed to become more fully indwelt by the Spirit of the Lord.

“The land becomes so familiar that we forget the reason we were drawn there in the first place. We look at Israel and forget Jesus.”

The Psalmist says that even the stones of Zion “are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity” (Psalm 102: 14). Plenty of people come to Israel and never see beyond the rocks and the ruins. But run your hand a little deeper into the dust and you’ll encounter Jesus, “the stone that the builders rejected” (Matthew 21:42). His imprint remains on every rock and ruin in the land. Meet Him there you and will never be the same.

Never been to Israel? It’s time. Lost your sense of wonder? Come meet Him again! 😊

Michael Hines is the ICEJ’s US Media Director and lives with his family in Murfreesboro, TN

Learn more about the ICEJ’s 2012 Feast of Tabernacles Tour at: www.icejusa.org/tour

Georgean H. Bradyville, TN
A Word from Zion

Bible Teaching Excerpts from the 2011 Feast of Tabernacles Celebration

“You are the Light”
Juergen Buehler

It is the prophet Daniel who gives us the purpose of world history. Daniel saw four beasts rising out of the sea of nations, each one representing an epoch of world history. God’s ‘political’ explanation was short and to the point: four kingdoms shall arise and govern the earth – at times even with an iron fist. But the saints shall possess the kingdom forever! In other words, the true meaning of world history is that throughout all the generations... God is looking for saints who one day can rule with Him. And at times it is the most difficult regimes which bring forth the most holy saints...

God’s Plan for the Arab World is also laid out in scripture. Whereas God promised to bless Ishmael in Genesis 17:20, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Zechariah all speak of the day when the Lord moves in the peoples surrounding Israel in restoration and blessing. We must be faithful to pray for the Arab peoples and to embrace the growing body of believers in these lands. Only when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the region will there be peace in the Middle East.

‘Israel: A Light to the Nations’
Malcolm Hedding

The nation of Israel received its unique and divine call to give light to the nations in Abraham... This light is salvation light. It shows the way back to God from the awful place of sin and rebellion. As we examine Abraham, we note that... God gave him a huge burden (Genesis 22:6-10); to birth light into the world through the person of the Messiah.

This light would only shine throughout the world because it would die and appear to go out! Israel was always called to give the light of a dying Messiah to the world (Acts 3:13-18). His death, on behalf of sinners, has reconciled us to God and delivered us from the oppressive darkness of sin. It is a light like none other! ...

God also gave him a hope (Hebrews 11:10). Abraham saw a city beyond time to which all the redeemed will be gathered. It is an eternal home that will be forever bathed in the light of God. There will be no more crying, death or pain. These are the “former things”. Only joy will fill the hearts of those who will eventually walk through its beautiful gates. But, as they do, they will note that it is an Israeli city in that its name is Jerusalem... and upon its magnificent gates will be written the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel and her glorious Messiah will forever be a light to the nations! (Revelation 21:9-14; 24)

Many of the individual teaching sessions from the 2011 Feast of Tabernacles are available in both CD & DVD format. Call (615) 895-9830 for more details or order online at: www.icejusa.org/feast2011

Bible Teaching From Jerusalem
In Philippians 3:10, Paul said: “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...” Friends, how do I get to know somebody? How do you get to know the man from Galilee? By going to conferences or on pilgrimages? No! You get to know somebody by spending time with them!

So I want to ask you a question, but don’t put your hand up because it might be embarrassing. How long was your quiet time this morning with God? Five minutes? Ten minutes? Fifteen minutes?

John Wesley is one of my heroes. He told his preachers: ‘If you don’t spend a minimum of five hours a day in the presence of God, change your trade.’ Then you wonder why God used that little man, 5’6”, to change the world... That same little Englishman was invited to an audience with the Queen, the most powerful woman in the world. He was waiting there a half hour early. Her Highness walked in fifteen minutes late with her whole entourage, all the butlers and waitresses. He bowed to her. And she said, “Mr. Wesley, I want to thank you for what you’re doing for my nation. You’ve turned it from a nation of drunkards into a nation that rules the world.” And as she sat down and they started to pour the tea, he got up and said: “Your Highness, I need to leave.” She said, “Beg your pardon!” He said, “Every day at 1:00 o’clock I have a meeting with the Saviour of the world.” With that he bowed and walked out to attend to his daily devotions. I want to ask you, ‘Would you do that?’

Just as the Jews were called to be a light to the Gentiles, our calling as Gentiles is to be a light to the Jews... How can we be a light to them?... I believe God has new things for the Christian Embassy, for this Feast and for Israel. And I went to God in prayer and asked, “Where do we go next? What next?” And then I remembered that we shine our light in three different ways, as they did in the New Testament. And those ways were word, deed and sign.

And I felt the Lord was saying, “It’s time for the Embassy to look at ‘sign’. The miraculous!” I believe we’ve already heard the word of the Lord in this celebration from the potato farmer [Angus Buchan]. He gave us two words: Prayer and Power. That’s the secret of his amazing ministry, but he was only telling us because he believes that could be the secret for us too! And I felt the Holy Spirit saying, “Go and do likewise!”

For more ICEJ teaching resources, including David Pawson’s ground-breaking exposition of Romans 9-11 & Malcolm Hedding’s life-changing explanation of the biblical significance of the Feast of Tabernacles call: (615) 895-9830 or visit us online at: www.icejusa.org/icej-store

"Unfortunately, not everyone in the world seeks the best for Jerusalem. There are people that challenge our history. Some of our neighbours wish to see us thrown out from the promised land. Sometimes, we feel alone. But with courage we stand here. And your friendship is warming our hearts. I want to thank you for your prayers and your unprecedented support and passion.”
What started as an outreach to help Israeli women refrain from having an abortion, today is a thriving organization which helps battered women re-establish their lives with dignity and hope.

For over eight years now “Abundant Life” has been tirelessly rescuing lives, both of unborn children as well as their mothers, who often come feeling hopeless when they learn they are pregnant. The center’s main counsellors, the husband-and-wife team of Yishai and Anat, reach out to these outcast women, many lost in prostitution, drug addiction, sex trafficking, or simply impoverishment.

In describing their approach to helping women in crisis, Anat quotes Scriptures with ease.

“The Lord gave us Torah as guidance, and as a warning,” she insists. “The Creator of life, who created us in His image, is telling us in His word to fight for life and not to be passive. We believe in the sanctity of life.”

When the couple first opened up their home to those in need, they weren’t sure if it would work or if it would be safe for their own children. But they knew it was a calling of God and that He would protect them. Fighting for the mothers and the babies in their wombs, the pair quickly learned that each case comes with a troubled past. And not all stories have a happy ending, as many require a long season of healing and grace.

Often the women seeking help are pursued by violent men. The Abundant Life home needed a security gate and alarm system, which ICEJ Aid was able to purchase. Today, both the women at the shelter and Yishai and Anat’s own family feel safe and protected.

The couple also meet weekly with victims of sex trafficking for a Bible study. In addition, Anat meets with women who need emotional healing after already having an abortion. The seminars she conducts are never easy, but she believes they are absolutely necessary for the women who have already suffered enough. Through this part of their ministry, a ‘shoes monument’ was created to symbolize the pain of mothers towards their aborted babies.

There is now a collection of 150 pairs of baby shoes in remembrance of the 150 abortions that are performed in Israel every day. A card is attached to each pair of shoes written by mothers to their aborted baby, expressing words of sorrow, love and regret.

Deuteronomy 30:19 encourages us to “choose life so that they and their children may live.” This is the inspiration behind many of the initiatives taken up by Yishai and Anat. Through partnering with Abundant Life, our ICEJ Aid team is making a difference in the lives of broken and battered Israeli women, giving them a real chance to choose life!

Please join with us as we continue to reach out to needy Israelis through our local charitable partners. Make your online donation to support ICEJ Aid at: www.icejusa.org/aid.

Estera Wieja serves as a staff writer and part of the ICEJ Media Team in Jerusalem.

“By Estera Wieja

“The Creator of life, who created us in His image, is telling us in His Word to fight for life and not to be passive. We believe in the sanctity of life.”
A Time of Trouble

The context of Daniel chapter 12 speaks about the very last days of world history. It will be a chaotic time - “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation” (Daniel 12:1). An anti-Christian Empire will rise and will fight even against the elect of God. Moral values will be turned upside down and all nations will conspire against Israel. Yet in the midst of this catastrophic time there will be a people who will shine like bright stars in a dark firmament.

When God created sun, moon and stars he gave them “for signs and seasons... to give light on the earth” (Genesis 1:14-15). What Daniel saw was a people shining like bright stars in the midst of a dark and perverse generation; a people called to be ‘a light to the nations’. It is interesting to note that the primary characteristic of this people is wisdom. “Those who are wise shall shine.”

A Key for Survival

Prayer is then not only a key for survival, but it will unlock for us the door of victory. We will “turn many to righteousness.” If you have just a vision of survival for the end times, let God challenge you today for a greater vision. Expect Jesus to use you powerfully in these last days. It is all related to how much time you will spend with him. Daniel says it in a different way. “But the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many...” (Daniel 11:32-33).

Draw close to God and allow him to infuse a fresh vision into your life. The season might get darker but this will only allow you shine even brighter. “...for behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light...” (Isaiah 60:1-3).

Vessels of His Light

As we pray this month for Israel and the nations expect great things from Him. Ask that His light will shine upon Israel. Pray that God will infuse His church in the nations with His penetrating light and trust God that you will become a vessel of that powerful light.

Join us in prayer this month and together we will carry out great exploits! 🙏

Dr. Juergen Buehler serves as ICEJ Executive Director. Sign up for prayer alerts from Israel on our website at: www.icejusa.org/isaiah62

Prayer Points for Israel

• For Israel’s soldiers - Pray for supernatural protection for all Israeli soldiers - that ongoing attempts to kidnap the next ‘Gilad Schalit’ will be thwarted and foiled.

For the Middle East

• For the Light of the World - Let us pray for our brethren in the Arab world that the light of the world will shine clearly and brightly through them; that the love of God will tear down fences of hostility; that many will be saved and that the gospel will spread quickly in the midst of chaos and uncertainty.

For the Ministry of the ICEJ

• Feast of Tabernacles - We are deeply grateful for a very anointed and blessed Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem.

• ICEJ Leadership – Over the course of the Feast celebration Dr. Juergen Buehler was formally elected as ICEJ Executive Director. Please pray for Juergen and his family, for wisdom, protection and guidance from above as he takes the ICEJ into a new season.

• ICEJ Staff & Volunteers - Please pray also for all staff members and volunteers who worked long hours to make the Feast of Tabernacles possible and for remaining full-time staff positions to be filled.
admitted that the decision to release so many, “vile murderers, whose hands are stained with blood of hundreds of victims,” was one of the toughest ever to come before the court.

Besides their interest in the return of Schalit, the Christian visitors were also closely following the on-going diplomatic drama over Palestinian statehood at the United Nations.

“I came here to pray for Israel, because those who pray for the peace of Jerusalem will have peace in their own house,” said Shola, a first time pilgrim from Nigeria. “We also heard that our president supported Israel in the UN and that made us very glad, and we hope he will keep supporting Israel. We all feel that you can’t fight what God has already institutionalized; you better flow with it.”

“I came here to Jerusalem for the Feast because I know that God is fulfilling His promises to Israel,” said Rev. Eloka Otto Zachee from Gabon, another country which, like Nigeria, is currently on the UN Security Council and is maintaining a surprisingly neutral stance so far on the Palestinian petition for statehood.

This year’s Feast delegations featured large groups from Australia, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Hong Kong, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Thailand and the United States. Pilgrims were clearly enthused about being in Israel for this biblical festival.

“There are about 200 Chinese at the Feast this year, which is a record for us,” said Deborah, a first time pilgrim from Beijing. “Many churches are praying and working to help Israel. You would be amazed how many Chinese people’s hearts are being prepared by the Lord, and they love Israel. They’re on fire for this country!”

“It’s been beautiful! It’s a great honor to represent India,” said Sujanta. “In India, people are very pro-Israel, especially the Christians, not so much the government. But I hope that will change soon because of the growing influence of the Christians.”

The warm embrace from Christians was reciprocated, as a record 2,000 Israelis were on hand for our annual Israeli Guest Night during the Feast. Among the Israeli dignitaries who also came to address the Feast gathering were Mayor Barkat, Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon and Knesset member David Rotem.

“Anyone who doubts that Israel has incalculable Christian support in at least 70 countries should have heard the cheers and loud, long blowing of shofars each time MK David Rotem, chairman of the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus, mentioned Jerusalem as ‘the undivided capital of the State of Israel,’” wrote Jerusalem Post social columnist Greer Fay Cashman in her report on the event.

“This year’s gathering once again underlined our message that Israel is not isolated but has millions of Christian advocates and admirers worldwide. Large delegations from some exciting new countries show this support is growing,” concluded Dr. Buehler.

For Schalit’s Recovery

Despite the high price Israel paid for his freedom, 25-year old Schalit is the first Israeli soldier in the past 26 years to come back alive from captivity. His release has buoyed the nation and brought to an end a difficult chapter in Israel’s history – a period that has seen two large-scale conflicts, in both Lebanon and Gaza. Let’s continue to pray for his full physical and emotional recovery.

For the Bereaved Families

Yet, the return of Gilad Schalit has been a bitter-sweet event for many. Over 1000 Palestinian terrorists were freed in exchange for his life, including convicted murderers who planned and assisted the killing of dozens of Israeli civilians in numerous suicide bombings across the country. The release of these prisoners has reopened the wounds of hundreds of families whose loved ones were killed or injured in these attacks. As we pray for them lets also remember the families of Hanan Barak and Pavel Slutzker - the two soldiers, both only 20 years of age, killed in the same 2006 raid in which Schalit was seized. For these families their grief lives on.

Isaiah 62 Prayer Focus

“Gilad Schalit Prisoner Exchange

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...” Isaiah 61: 1-2

On October 26th, the ICEJ’s worldwide constituency spent a day in fasting and prayer for Israel as part of our year-long Isaiah 62 Prayer Initiative. We began by thanking the Lord for the miraculous release of captive Israeli soldier, Gilad Schalit and for answering the faithful prayers of Christians throughout the earth who have continued to pray for this young man since his capture by Hamas in June 2006.

For more news reports from the 2011 Feast of Tabernacles go to: www.icejusa.org/news