THE TROUBLED ARAB WORLD
GOD’S PURPOSES FOR EGYPT AND THE MIDDLE EAST
BY DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER
ICEJ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The city of Jerusalem is currently witnessing extraordinary signs of new life on its streets. Over recent months, exciting new venues have opened for local residents and visitors to relax and enjoy their Shabbats. The city is becoming more attractive and modern each and every year, without losing its historic character. These dramatic changes have meant faster highways and tunnels to speed up travel around the city, and new skyscrapers and shopping malls for the avant-garde, thereby lending Jerusalem a unique feel of both old and new like no other city in the world.

Yet one thing which does not change is God’s calling over Jerusalem. This city has an eternal calling which was first referred to when Abraham met Melchizedek, the “King of Salem”, meaning both king of righteousness and of peace (Hebrews 7:1-2). It was in this place of Salem, which later became Jerusalem, that Abraham – and with him all of humankind – had an encounter with one representing the true ruler of righteousness and peace.

These are two eternal values which very much define the Kingdom of God and the impact of the Cross which stood in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. When Christ died for us, he became our peace and our righteousness. While these are values which first and foremost work themselves out in the lives of individual believers, they eventually will be the hallmarks of Christ’s rule on the earth after his return.

At that time, Jerusalem will be the place from which God’s righteousness and peace will flow to all nations. It is because of this calling that God wants His Church to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and this is why the International Christian Embassy is located here in the heart of the city.

The Christian Embassy strives to be an Embassy of the heavenly Kingdom and its followers around the world. Please pray with us, that God will use us as effective ambassadors of Christ in this great city.

Thank you for standing with us in your prayers and in your giving. May the Lord bless you out of Zion!

Yours in Christ,

DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER
ICEJ Executive Director

The New King James Bible is used for all Bible references unless otherwise noted.

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Special Pre-Feast Issue
We warmly invite you to come up to Jerusalem for this year’s Feast of Tabernacles. We hope that you will learn more of Israel, her people and her history, and receive further enlightenment concerning the central role she plays in the destiny of this world. Above all, we trust that the keeping of the Feast and your response to the biblical injunction will be a source of blessing to yourself, your family and your nation.

To learn more about the upcoming Feast of Tabernacles visit: www.icejusa.org
LIVING BY THE WORD

ICEJ Arise committed to teaching the Bible to young adults

BY JANI SALOKANGAS
ICEJ ARISE DIRECTOR

Elijah Abraham from Swaziland being baptized in the Jordan River by Jani Salokangas
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RISE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2002 and has been working ever since to reach and influence the world’s young people. As the young adults department of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, we are seeking to build a global movement fully committed to Jesus in all areas of our lives while at the same time standing with Israel.

Through the work of ICEJ Arise, more than 1,500 young adults from more than thirty countries have visited Israel in one of our annual summer tours. Hundreds of thousands are touched directly through our on-line magazine AriseNow, as well as by the weekly radio show AriseBase. Arise is focusing its work on three simple but essential areas; to teach, to live and to share the Word of God.

Teaching the Word
How is the Bible influencing you? How often do you read it? What about others around you? Have you ever considered the Bible’s relevance and importance in the shaping of Western society and culture? What does the Bible say about modern Israel?

These are relevant questions which all young Christians should seek to answer. The Bible has sold far more copies than any other book in history. Still, so many young people find themselves detached and distant from its message in their daily lives.

The Bible is the principal platform for our encounters with the Almighty and it has precious lessons to teach us. In Psalm 119:105, we can read that the word of God is the lamp that illuminates our steps.

Arise wants to encourage and teach young people to stand on the word of God, because we believe that the youth of today need His word. “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:4)

When we try to “live by bread alone”, we feed the body but starve the soul. The Bible is like ‘meat’ for our souls, giving us strength and stamina to face the daily temptations of the world and attacks of the devil. If we neglect to read the Bible, we are missing the best things in life. Earthly things do not satisfy the heart, but the Bible is a book of the heart and it shows us how we may possess and enjoy real living.

Anyone who studies the Bible with any amount of honesty and effort, and compares the prophetic statements to secular history, will conclude that the Bible is a supernatural book. The Bible is clear; God chose Israel and the Jewish people to be the vehicle that would bring Jesus into the world in order to redeem all who trust in Him. With the return of the Jewish people into their own land just as the Hebrew prophets wrote 2,500 years ago, God’s prophetic words have become true.

Living the Word
It is one thing to confess that you believe in Jesus, but it is yet another to reflect that faith in your everyday life. Many young adults of today who have been raised in Christian homes are claiming the title ‘Christian’, but at the same time they are finding it hard to live out the words and principles of the Bible.

According to recent research by Voddie Baucham (Family Driven Faith - 10), between 70 and 88 per cent of Christian teenagers are leaving the church by their second year in college. If our young people are leaving their churches, it is because these churches are either failing to respond to the needs of the young people or the young people see no value in living according to the Bible. Arise therefore seeks to provide tools and simple ways to encourage young people to apply the word of God in their daily lives.

To encourage the upcoming generation, Arise has a quarterly magazine, AriseNow. It is packed with exciting and practical information for young Christians. Arise also has a weekly radio show, the AriseBase program, which aims to engage and challenge its young audience to live a fearless life, to honour God and to resolve problematic issues they are facing. Most importantly, the Arise team worldwide is committed to becoming living testimonies, to demonstrate that living by the word of God is the recipe for a successful life.

Sharing the Word
According to a new survey by the Barna Group, only 16% of non-Christians in their late teens and twenties said they have a “good impression” of Christianity. The last thing the rest want to see is somebody carrying a Bible, acting like they know exactly what you need and how you feel. Truth be told, when they ask you to read from their Bibles, you are thinking you would rather hit them over the head with it!

This is the very scenario that makes the concept of sharing your faith so intimidating. Most people would like to help others, but knowing what to say and how to say it stops you in your tracks. So how do you share your faith without making people run and hide from you, or blow up in your face?

The best way to share your faith is to demonstrate the incredible things you believe by staying positive and having a good attitude, especially when hard times occur in our lives. In the Bible we can read about the story of Peter and Jesus as the waters raged on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus called Peter to walk by faith on top of the waters. He kept walking above the water as long as he stayed focused on Jesus. But once he focused on the storm, he sank.

When the people around you see the peace in your life, especially when it seems like you are surrounded by storms, you can bet they will want to know how to get what you have! On the other hand, if all they see is the top of your head as you sink into the water, there is not a whole lot to ask.

Get involved with Arise today! Find out how at www.arisegeneration.org

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IN JULY, EIGHT YOUNG ADULTS from Germany, Swaziland, Switzerland and the US participated in the annual summer tour organized by ICEJ Arise. Throughout the eleven days of touring Israel, the group had incredible opportunities to learn about its land and engage with its people.

The journey started in Tiberias, where participants joined the three-person Arise team from Jerusalem for a time of walking in the footsteps of Jesus along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The group was especially excited to visit the Mount of Beatitudes, the traditional place where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount.

Another stop was Mt. Bental, on the doorstep to Syria, where the Arise group stretched out their hands towards the war-torn country and prayed for the turmoil which has plagued Syria since the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011.

In the city of Beit Shean, the group spent a morning playing and encouraging children from broken families in an after-school club for children-at-risk. The afternoon was spent touring the ancient ruins of the city where, according to the Bible, King Saul was hanged on the city walls.

One of the highlights of the itinerary was the full day spent at the First Baptist Church in Bethlehem, one of the largest churches in the West Bank under the leadership of Dr. Naim Khoury. The group painted a room used daily by various Arab Christian youth groups from Bethlehem. The room was also fitted with a new carpet thanks to assistance provided by ICEJ AID.

The packed schedule also included such incredible places as the Dead Sea and sunrise at Masada, a night in a Bedouin tent, a camel ride through the desert, not to mention the inspiring biblical and historical sites of Jerusalem.
The time spent at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, was especially impacting. The group had the opportunity to meet with Yossi, a 78-year-old Holocaust survivor who moved them to tears by sharing his horrific experiences in Nazi death camps.

During the tour of Israel two of the participants, Caleb Webb from America and Elijah Abraham from Swaziland, decided to be baptized in the Jordan River.

One of the last stops was Rehovot, where the team linked up with the Leket charitable organization which cooperates with local farmers to glean crops from the fields to provide food for the poor. Together, the Arise team managed to pick some 800 kilos of tomatoes that was used to feed close to one hundred Israeli families living below the poverty line. Then after the hard work in the fields, the group ended their tour on the beaches of Tel Aviv for a time of relaxation and fun.

Dexter King, a political science major from Portland, Maine, was awestruck at his experiences in Israel.

“The trip was a gift from my mom”, King explained. “I hadn’t even thought about Israel before, but I am glad that I came. Every day I have been fascinated by something.”

“It was incredible being in Tiberias and around the Sea of Galilee, which is such a biblically charged area”, he added. “It was also great to travel down to the Dead Sea and the areas surrounding it. And being in Jerusalem is unreal. I only see and hear about Jerusalem on the news and to be here, and having gone to Bethlehem, is incredible.”

“I want to be able to defend Israel and to have an intelligent conversation from the things that I have learned. The separation wall between Bethlehem and Jerusalem is not because Israelis are racist, but there are so many things that go into it. And I hope I will be able to talk to the people back home about what I have experienced”, he stated.

Nepi, from Switzerland, noted that “by being in Israel the Bible becomes real. You get to help people and the tour is offering you something for all areas - the mind, body and soul.”

“Working in Bethlehem was nice, as people there were really open-minded and I liked it a lot. If Palestinians and Israelis one day will be able to share Jesus together, I believe that there will be peace in the land”, she concluded.

Swazi visitor Elijah Abraham expressed his joy at just being in the Holy Land.

“I got fully sponsored to come here, and I feel so happy that I was able to come. This is my first travel to another country, and being in Israel has been such a joy. I liked floating on top of the Dead Sea, and going on the camel ride. There were a lot of things that I enjoyed”, he beamed.

“It was awesome being in Bethlehem, seeing the city where Jesus was born, and it was a great joy to see Arabs who praise Jesus”, he recounted. “I will tell my friends back home that Israel is a nice country to visit, and that I have enjoyed every minute.”

“For me, this is the nicest view I have seen since I came to Israel”, Elijah shared as he looked out over Jerusalem from the Haas Promenade, a famous spot for its stunning vista of the Old City. “You can see the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives where Jesus one day will return to. I can sit here at one spot and look out over Jerusalem the whole day, it’s so beautiful.”

If you have not yet been to Israel, or if you would like to come back again, keep your eyes open for the Arise Summer Tour 2014. Coming to Israel will change your life forever, give you a greater understanding of your Bible, and present you with a new first-hand perspective of Israel and its many challenges today.

Stay up-to-date on Arise through our website at: www.arisegeneration.org
Striving for Excellence

The International Christian Embassy has increasingly felt led to give greater emphasis to expanding the educational opportunities available for Israel’s youth

BY ESTERA WIEJA

A FENCE ENCLOSES A MODERN CAMPUS with beautiful gardens. Inside the hallways, all the walls are covered with skilled artwork, plaques of academic distinction and descriptions of scientific discoveries. As recess begins, dozens of young students run down the stairs. Their skin and hair are all colors, they speak different languages, some carry musical instruments or huge art cases. They are the country’s best and brightest youngsters.

If it sounds like a dream academy for gifted students, well it is. Welcome to the Israel Center for Excellence through Education and its affiliated Israel Arts and Science Academy, which are very real places that can be found on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

The International Christian Embassy has increasingly felt led to give greater emphasis to expanding the educational opportunities available for Israel’s youth, including not just the underprivileged but also the brightest in this land. To that end, the ICEJ has agreed to cooperate with the Center for Excellence in coming years to open its doors to promising students whose families cannot afford such quality education for their children.

The Center for Excellence was founded with the goal of taking the most exceptional students from throughout Israel, coming from many different backgrounds, and providing them with advanced scholastics in their areas of interest – whether science, art, music or the humanities. The careful admissions process is focused on the interview with the student, not the parents or teachers, to make sure they are interested in attending the school.

The Center for Excellence is unique in that it does not conduct any financial inquiry of the family in selecting students. It is based on academic abilities and giftings alone, not ability to pay.

The Center is also distinct for the welcoming environment it provides for talented, diligent students who are often teased and treated as outsiders at other schools. Here, they have a place where they belong, where they can be inspired to excel in healthy competition with equally outstanding students.

Dima is a Christian from Nazareth who learned about the school from a Facebook pop-up ad. He convinced his mother to visit the campus and instantly knew it was the place for him.

At that point, Dima had already won multiple writing contests and received scholarships for study abroad. Specializing in humanities, Dima, now in 12th grade, studied especially the life of the Apostle Paul in his Jewish context. Often shunned for his brilliance by peers in his hometown, Dima finally feels proud and excited about his level of intelligence at the Center for Excellence.

“I love the diversity here”, said Dima, who is of Russian Orthodox heritage. “We get along because our passions bring us closer together.”

“The education we get here prepares us to lead”, related Maayan, a student from Raanana.

“I cannot even compare our school to other schools”, she added. “We do so much hands-on work, we learn so much about leadership and how to impact the society around us. And the diversity! I’ve never met a Christian before, and now I have friends like Dima. I’m Jewish and live in the city, but here I sit in classrooms with Druze, Arabs, kibbutzniks... We’re all friends.”

Besides the heavy schoolwork, each student is also responsible to do a community project, to have an impact on the world around them. Some students visit the sick in hospital, while others tutor children from regular schools.

Eldan, who excels in music, makes his way every week to one of Jerusalem’s centers for the disabled to help take care of those that cannot help themselves. Despite his busy schedule that involves composing and conducting music, Eldan enjoys his community service because it brings him closer to those in need.

By donating to the ICEJ’s educational fund, you can help provide scholarships for brilliant students who otherwise could not afford to attend a school of such high quality. So help us give Israel’s brightest young students the chance to reach their potential and become the leaders of tomorrow.

Give to the ICEJ AID Educational Fund. Donate at: us.icej.org/educational-fund
Daily scenes of students at the Center for Excellence in Jerusalem (Courtesy photos)
IN SEARCHING OUT WAYS TO BLESS

and support the neediest in Israel, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem often is taken to places where the worst tragedies strike. One of those places is Shiloh, which holds a central place in biblical history.

Some 3,500 years ago, Shiloh was the village where Joshua divided the land among the twelve tribes of Israel and where the Ark of the Covenant came to rest for nearly four centuries. Until the death of Eli the High Priest, Shiloh was the place of pilgrimage for the feasts of Israel three times each year. It was also the place where the great prophet Samuel was raised to hear the voice of God.

You can find Shiloh easily by just following the directions contained in the Book of Judges (21:19), which says it is “north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah”.

Today, tel Shiloh is an important archaeological site and some exciting new finds were just uncovered dating back to the time when the Tabernacle stood there. However, the area has been in the Israeli press in recent years for other reasons, namely that Shiloh’s residents have suffered through five different murderous terror attacks in recent years, claiming the lives of seven of its citizens. Two died in roadside attacks, one in Jerusalem, two at school, one while doing guard duty in another community, and one while on army duty. This does not include the large numbers of people from Shiloh injured and traumatized in terror attacks.

So the place that once was the spiritual center of the Jewish people today is home to a different kind of center – a therapeutic one.

Eleven years ago, long-time Shiloh resident David Rubin was driving home from Jerusalem with his three year-old son. Out of nowhere, gun shots were fired and instantly they were both wounded – David was shot in the leg and his son had a serious head injury. After the child was miraculously saved, David realized that he still suffered from a psychological trauma. That episode sparked the educator and book author to open the Shiloh Israel Children’s Fund.

What started out as a general rehabilitation complex with conventional modes of therapy (speech therapy, to name one) soon became a psychological, post-traumatic center for children deeply impacted by terror. With the use of art, music and movement, as well as interaction with animals, the children learn to open up again, express themselves and speak about what they are going through. Rubin hopes in future that the center also will provide hydrotherapy, which will require more investment.

In representing compassionate Christians from around the world, the ICEJ wants to be sensitive to the serious problems facing these traumatized children and thus we have begun supporting the work of Rubin’s center.

The children’s center serves the surrounding region, not just Shiloh. Some of the children at the center have lost a family member or friend to terror. A number of them have lost a teacher. Many know someone who has been hurt or frozen with fear. Last but not least, there are plenty of children who did not experience terrorism, but because of the

ANIMAL THERAPY being used to treat children at the Shiloh Trauma Center

As opposed to adults the way children react to terror is often misunderstood, as they usually do not know how to verbalize what they feel. They have nightmares, wet their beds and become aggressive. Often the anxiety they experience goes way beyond what their parents can handle. The therapeutic center also offers workshops for parents and teachers, so they can help the children deal with their struggles.

ICEJ AID has become a sponsor of the Shiloh therapy center so that these traumatized children can grow and develop in an environment of care and understanding. We hope Shiloh will again be a place where children are raised into prophets. 🙏

Please partner with ICEJ AID in caring for these innocent victims of terror. Donate today at www.icejusa.org/aid
This Spring, German Christians donated a portable bomb shelter through the ICEJ to the Noam Orot school in the town of Netivot, in southern Israel. Recently, staff from our Jerusalem headquarters visited the school, located just 15 kilometers from Gaza. The town has 30,000 residents who live within close range of rocket fire by Hamas and other Islamist terror militias. Despite an informal truce, rockets are still falling from time-to-time, and when the code red siren sounds people have just 15 seconds to find shelter.

School principal Avia Wertenschlag puts her heart and soul into being a teacher at Noam Orot. Her 420 children are taught in separate classes for boys and girls.

“The school is my second home”, said Avia. “When I hear the children laugh and shout I am happy because I know we live momentarily a normal life. But the children also know what to do in the event of an alarm.”

Elia and his friends were playing with marbles on the school grounds when they were asked to demonstrate for their Christian visitors how they usually respond when the siren sounds. As fast as they could run, the boys raced to a nearby building, each holding their kippa with one hand to prevent losing it, then flung themselves down on the ground close beside a wall and covered their necks with their hands. The whole demonstration took less than ten seconds.

“We exercise a lot because we don’t know when the next alarm will come”, said Avia. “Many thanks to the Christians for your help!”

The bomb shelter was delivered by our project partner “Operation Lifeshield” and set up next to the bus stop in front of the school. Here, the children arrive in the morning and are picked up by their parents in the afternoon.

The distance from the bus stop to the school’s safe room is too far away to reach it in time in case of a rocket attack.

“Before we got the bomb shelter there was much confusion when the siren went off while the students were waiting for the bus or for their parents”, explained Avia. “The children did not know where to find protection. We are very fortunate to have this shelter at the bus stop. Now the boys and girls feel safer.”

Please help us with your donation to the ICEJ to ensure the safety of other children in Israel. Many thanks!

Donate at: us.icej.org/relief-work and click on “Israel in Crisis”.
ICEJ NORWEGIAN CONFERENCE

IN LATE JUNE, the ICEJ’s Norwegian Branch under the directorship of Leif Wellerop held its annual summer conference in the very beautiful coastal town of Kristiansand, in the southern most city of the country. The venue was the newly built Scandic Hotel with its well-appointed and excellent facilities.

In all some six hundred people attended the conference, which apart from its keynote speaker Rev. Malcolm Hedding from the USA, was supported by an array of international singers, musicians and dancers, including the popular tenor Theis Sandvik and trumpeter Mihkel Metsala. The Popov family was a blessing as ever, as was the very blessed worship team from the local Christian Center led by Ann Catrin Sletner.

Rev. Steven Khoury, an Arab pastor from the largest Baptist church in Bethlehem also joined ICEJ International Director Rev. Juha Ketola from Jerusalem as visiting speakers. Pal Pedersen and Dag Juliussen, deputy director of ICEJ-Norway, shared from the word of God as well during this colourful and spiritually-rich conference.

This year’s gathering was different from those before in that the meetings were televised throughout Scandinavia by the Christian network 1, which substantially increased the reach and impact of the conference by some two hundred thousand people. Indeed, the response from the Nordic countries was immediate, as hundreds of people phoned or emailed in to express their joy and appreciation at being able to watch the meetings.

A highlight of the conference was a special program for children and young people. Norway’s leading youth evangelist, Jarle Waldemar, ministered to the children with great effect and blessing.

The conference was opened by Leif Wellerop, while the Israeli Ambassador to Oslo, Dr. Naim Araidi, extended good wishes on behalf of the State of Israel. The Mayor of Kristiansand, Mr. Arvid Grundejon, welcomed the conference attendees to his city and gave them an overview of its achievements and challenges.

Rev. Hedding, the former Executive Director of the ICEJ and now an Associate Minister of World Outreach Church in Murfreesboro Tennessee, addressed the conference in four teaching sessions on the theme of “The Jews”. This included the subtopics: “The Gift of the Jews”, “The Kingdom of the Jews”, “The Son of the Jews”, and “The City of the Jews”.

Without a doubt, there was a great sense of the presence of God in the meetings. The conference was closed by a live concert presented by Ulf Christiansson and his family, formerly with the Jerusalem Band.

The Norwegian Branch is among the strongest branches in the worldwide constituency of the ICEJ. For several decades it has been a testimony to the generosity of the Norwegian Christians and to the exceptional leadership of Leif Wellerop.

Next year in Kristiansand! 😊
OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been actively assisting Jewish communities in Central Asia to strengthen their life and to make aliyah to Israel. Much of this work has been centered in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, and has been overseen by Serguei Popov, the noted violinist who regularly performs at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem but also has a big heart for aliyah.

Uzbekistan is one of the six Muslim-majority countries located in Central Asia which were formerly part of the Soviet Union. It is a mountainous country that has long had a thriving Jewish community of both Ashkenazi and Sephardi background. The local Sephardim are also known as Bukharan Jews (or “Mountain Jews”), who moved into the region from Persia around the 11th century and still speak Farsi.

The first Ashkenazim were merchants from the western Russian Empire, but many more arrived in the region during the Second World War to escape the German army’s advances deep into Soviet territory. At the time, many Uzbek families were known to take Jews into their homes and even share with them their last piece of bread.

The Uzbek Jewish population once numbered more than one hundred thousand people, and they made significant contributions to the development of the region in such areas as healthcare, education, science, law, music, literature and the arts.

But today the Jews number only 35,000 at most, due to assimilation and emigration to Israel and elsewhere. The community did well in preserving their religious traditions amid a Muslim majority and then the forced atheism of the Soviet era. But ethnic tensions and the lure of re-joining other Jewish communities abroad have been strong in recent decades.

In the old days, almost every Bukharan community had their own synagogues headed by trained rabbis. But during the years of Soviet rule, many synagogues were closed or destroyed in Uzbekistan, as were churches and mosques. Yet Jewish life continued behind closed doors.

Currently, there are nine synagogues left in Uzbekistan, four of them in Tashkent. Jewish life and identity has recovered thanks to help from various outside Jewish organizations since Uzbekistan gained its independence in 1991. Christian ministries have also stepped in to provide assistance, including the ICEJ, acting in partnership with Ministry to Israel.

Over the past 14 years, the ICEJ’s collaborative efforts with MTI have helped revive local Jewish communities and facilitate aliyah for many families, largely under the leadership of Serguei Popov. This has been done in close cooperation with the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Israel Embassy in Tashkent.

One of the ICEJ’s most important projects in Uzbekistan has been a bus transport operation to assist Jews in moving to Israel, and also to aid local Jewish communities.

“We cannot even imagine what we would have done without this bus”, said Idan Peysahovich, director of The Jewish Agency offices in Central Asia. “The bus operations are used for children in synagogue classes, for youth camps, for adult seminars and for aliyah needs.”

The ICEJ also has funded a successful computer class project in which the Jewish Agency has set up a center with twelve computers in Tashkent where Jews can come for educational studies and Hebrew lessons on-line, as well as to begin the aliyah process. Up-to-date computers are expensive and hard to come by in Uzbekistan, so the ICEJ-sponsored center has proven to be a very real blessing to the Jewish community.

Popov also recently helped organise a series of three violin concerts “Echo of Jerusalem” in tandem with the Israeli Embassy and Ambassador Hillel Newman personally. Such cultural programs help improve the image of Israel and raise more interest in aliyah.

We need your support for our aliyah efforts in Uzbekistan, because the situation in the Muslim world has become very unstable in recent years. No doubt, big changes are in store for all of Central Asia and it is time for the remaining Jews to come home.

Donate towards our Aliyah Operations today at www.us.icej.org/aliyah
In July, the Egyptian military sent jets over a mass crowd of anti-Muslim Brotherhood protesters to show the army was with them (AP).
Two-and-a-half years into the Arab Spring (or “Arab Winter” as some call it), the regional unrest is still gathering steam. While Israel seems to be an island of peace and economic stability, the rest of the Middle East is increasingly chaotic and no one can foresee what the near future will bring.

It all started in December 2010 when popular unrest began in Tunisia and then quickly spread to Egypt, Libya and other parts of the Arab world. In the case of Egypt, the initial hopes for a democratic spring of true political freedoms soon soured with the election of an Islamist government led by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Before long, protesters returned to the streets. For some, their hopes for freedom and democracy were being shattered by efforts to impose stricter forms of shari’a law. Others grew anxious over the Brotherhood’s inability to rescue the crumbling economy. The military recently stepped in to take control of the country once more, but all signs are pointing towards a civil war. Already, the unrest has left dozens of civilians dead.

In Syria, the Arab Spring has provoked a brutal civil war which has claimed more lives over the past two years than all the Arab-Israeli wars combined. More than 100,000 people have been killed as troops loyal to the Assad regime battle against rebel forces, and even rebel factions fight against each other.

This mounting death toll follows a decade of war and bloodshed in neighboring Iraq. Even though American soldiers left the frontlines of battle in Iraq in 2011, another 5,000 people have been killed since then in clashes between various Islamic militias.

The Western world seems lost as to what to do about all this violence and mayhem. Another invasion like Iraq or intervention like Libya is fraught with peril. The situation in Egypt is quite complex. Military coups are in general opposed by Western democracies, however over the past few weeks the guardians of democracy in the West were surprisingly silent as they hope that the military will install a more liberal government.

Western leaders are in a similar dilemma regarding Syria, in that they are ready to get rid of a repressive dictator but concerned over radical Islamist elements in the opposition.

Egypt’s unique history
Despite all of the above, I do believe there is a positive biblical perspective to consider when watching these developments unfold today. A look back in history can help give us a fresh and hopeful outlook on current events.

From ancient times until today, Egypt has always played a central role in the region. The country mentioned in the Bible the most – besides Israel – is Egypt, with some 700 references. The Hebrew Patriarchs spent time in Egypt - Abraham in Genesis 12:10 and Jacob in Genesis 46:3-6. All twelve sons of Jacob, for whom the tribes of Israel are named, died in Egypt. And of course, the great Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt features prominently in Scripture.

Even Abraham’s relations with the Egyptian woman Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, from whom arose the Arab nations.

Egypt’s ignored history
Throughout the Bible the nation of Egypt is generally referenced in negative terms, often alluding to bondage and sin (e.g., Revelation 11:8). But there is another side to Egypt’s history which developed over the centuries.

King Solomon, for instance, established a friendly pact with Egypt when he married Pharaoh’s daughter and even built her a palace in Jerusalem. While the woman became a source of idol worship in Israel, it was the beginning of a political and economic alliance that lasted for a long time - albeit with some often violent interruptions. Yet this alliance was never fully reliable – in fact, God warned Israel not to place their trust in Egypt (2 Kings 18:21).
The main change, however, occurred at the time of the Babylonian Exile when a significant number of Jews fled to Egypt and established a sizable Jewish community there (2 Kings 25:26). According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, this Diaspora community grew to more than one million in number around the second century BC, centered in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria. This city grew to great prominence in Antiquity and produced such leading Jewish figures as the philosopher Philo of Alexandria.

Josephus records that during the second century BC even a replica of the Jerusalem Temple was built in Egypt and maintained by Onia, a son of the High Priest in Jerusalem.

It was in Egypt where the Tanakh (the Old Testament) was first translated into a foreign language. This Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible was called the Septuagint (LXX), referring to the 70 priests/scholars who translated the Scriptures for the legendary library of Alexandria.

The Apostle Paul would often quote from the Septuagint when he referenced Old Testament verses in his New Testament epistles. Thus, the Septuagint became an important tool for preaching the Gospel among the Greek-speaking gentile nations.

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus also spent some of his childhood in Egypt when his parents sought refuge there from Herod’s jealous wrath (Matthew 2:13-15, quoting Hosea 11:1).

In Church history, it was Egypt where the new faith in Jesus Christ experienced its strongest early growth, with Christian communities being established all across the country. Members of the Egyptian Coptic Church today claim to be the descendants of this first century church, which would make it the oldest of the historic churches still around. Some of the current revival meetings reported out of Egypt are led by born-again, Spirit-filled Coptic priests. Along with Lebanon, Egypt is still home to one of the largest Christian communities in the Middle East, with Copts making up some 10% of the nation’s 80 million citizens.

**Hope for Egypt and Syria**

When we look at Egypt today, we all should be greatly encouraged to pray for this nation. While many prophecies declare judgment over Egypt, the Bible also assigns it a glorious future.

The prophet Isaiah speaks in chapter 19 most clearly about God’s redemptive purposes for Egypt. He foresees a national revival in Egypt which will be nothing short of miraculous (Isaiah 19:18-25).

Egypt will have a national place of worship - “an altar for the Lord” (v. 19).

“The Lord will be known to Egypt and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day.” (v. 21)

It will culminate in a period of peace for the entire region, which will include Egypt, Assyria and Israel: “In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria... In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria – a blessing in the midst of the land.” (Isaiah 19:23-24)

What a wonderful hope! The goal which all political initiatives in recent decades have failed to produce will come into reality. It is remarkable that Isaiah could see peace and restoration for both great empires – Assyria and Egypt – each of which threatened Israel at the time the prophecy was given.

While on the one hand Isaiah prophesied against “the broken reed” of Egypt (Isaiah 36:6) and against Assyria (“Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger...” Isaiah 10:5), the prophet could also see that God’s plan of salvation would eventually prevail also for these gentile nations that were hostile to Israel.

As we read this remarkable chapter in context, the passage begins by describing great troubles for Egypt. The prophet sees political turmoil coming, in which “Egyptians will be against Egyptians” (Isaiah 19:2). It speaks about a “cruel master” ruling the country for a while (v. 4) and of great natural calamity and economic challenges (vs. 5-10).

People will look for counsel but will find none to give understanding. The prophet challenges the wise to give understanding and to “let them know what the Lord has purposed” (v. 12). Still, nobody is able to give understanding – very much like today. Yet it will be in this time of great trouble when “they will cry to the Lord because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them” (v. 20).

Assyria was the second great world empire at the time of Isaiah. Its borders included much of the modern-day nations of Syria and Iraq. When we look at the current situation, we see not only Egypt but also Syria and Iraq in a state of chaos and civil war as alluded to in Isaiah 19:1-15.

**Times of fulfillment**

Time will tell whether we will see Isaiah 19 fulfilled in our day, but we have to recognise that much about the current situation fits this passage. I doubt whether there was any period in history when we could see the developments coincide with the prophetic word like today.

Many Bible scholars today recognize that with the re-establishment of the state of Israel and the return of the Jews from exile, we have entered into a new season of prophetic fulfilment. As the prophets foretold, the Jews have returned from all four corners of the earth. The desert is blossoming and Israel has established itself as a prosperous and secure nation even in times of conflict. This enables us to look ahead with expectancy that other amazing prophecies will be fulfilled.
No matter your eschatology, Isaiah 19 should serve as a strong reminder of the great purposes of God with Israel and its neighbors. It might be tempting to focus only on the negative headlines about Islamists seizing power and to just expect judgment ahead. But we all need to understand that the God of Israel has plans and purposes of peace and reconciliation for the entire region (see for example, Jeremiah 48:47; 49:6, 39).

Isaiah 19 starts with a declaration of God being in control: “Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud, and will come into Egypt; The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence.” A mere look at the facts on the ground right now might portend chaos and uncertainty. Surely, the counselors will fail in their wisdom. But the purpose of God for Egypt is established and it eventually will lead to her national salvation alongside Israel.

Conclusion
It is important to develop a view for the region which looks beyond what we see in the daily headlines. While on the surface a clash of religions and ideologies seems underway and the region appears to be sliding into the hands of radical Islamists, we should never stop placing our hope in the One who says “all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). Jesus is Lord of all the nations and the next great harvest field appears to be in the Muslim world.

In the Bible, we frequently see a pattern whereby troubles come upon Israel in order to draw her people closer to God. The Book of Judges has much to say about this ongoing cycle of an Israel in distress which repents and experiences peace, and yet when they turn from God again their troubles return. The Book of Hebrew encourages us that times of discipline and correction are a sign of God at work in those He loves (Hebrews 12:3-11).

At the end of the day, God wants to bring this troubled region to a place where he can truly call out to “Egypt My people and Assyria the work of my hands”. Sometimes, God does come “with darkness under His feet” (Psalm 18:9). We have seen this in other countries in recent decades. Just two generations ago China was taken over by a radical Communist regime and yet today it is witnessing one of the greatest revivals in human history. Iran was taken over by apocalyptic Ayatollahs and yet it is currently experiencing the fastest rate of church growth in the world.

Let us not forget that God has a wonderful plan and purpose for every single nation in the earth. Paul said in Acts 17:26-27 that the Lord determines the times and borders of nations (and even their respective rulers) “in order that they might seek Him”.

There is a purpose of God today for every single nation in the Middle East and it is ultimately a purpose of salvation. Let us pray like never before for these countries. The Lord wants people from Egypt, Syria, Iraq and the entire Middle East in heaven with Him one day. And God wants to bring His peace to the region and to the entire world. This needs to be our objective and prayer. 😇
MANY THOUGHT THE ARAB SPRING was bringing Islamists into power to stay, but the recent dramatic uprising in Egypt was a huge surprise. The world watched in amazement as millions took to the streets in early July to demand the removal of President Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood after only one year in office. It was quickly touted as the largest political protest in human history and opened the door for the military to depose Mursi.

Now the world is anxiously waiting to see whether the Muslim Brotherhood will resort to protracted violence in a bid to regain power, thereby sparking a civil war in Egypt. The upheavals of the Arab Spring are far from over, and Egypt’s “second revolution” has raised many key questions about the direction the Middle East is taking.

ICEJ News posed some of these questions to Prof. Hillel Frisch, a Middle East specialist at Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv, and here are his answers in brief...

Q) Everyone thought that once the Muslim Brotherhood came to power, they would be there to stay. Were you surprised at how the people rose up and the military joined them in deposing Mursi?

Frisch: Absolutely! I never believed that the upper middle class in Egypt was so resilient and tough and would manage also to convince people poorer than themselves that the Muslim Brotherhood might have to be removed. And that they were willing to work with the military...

Q) What brought so many out into the streets - the sagging economy or the imposing of sharia law?

Frisch: It was the feeling that the Muslim Brotherhood was really trying to take control of Egypt in the same way that basically the Mubarak regime and the military controlled Egypt beforehand. Most perceived it was an almost exclusive monopoly that they were seeking. Evidently, there is a very deep fear about the Muslim Brotherhood that has been promoted for decades by the regime in power, dating back some 70 years.

Q) There have been several dozen civilians killed in clashes with the army since the coup. Are Egyptians watching the civil war in Syria and saying “that’s not for us”?

Frisch: Sure! They’re watching Syria. They watched Libya. You see it in the talkbacks and postings on the Web, in newspaper articles. They’re all saying they want to avoid that...

Q) Were the massive protests across Egypt a repudiation of political Islam?

Frisch: Indeed! These were people for sure who want to enjoy both traditional Islam and globalization, jobs, careers, free press... It will take time but this does seem to be the universal message coming out of these events – that we’re not going to be living in an age of theocracy.

Q) What are the implications for Israel in this latest upheaval in Egypt?

Frisch: Obviously for Israel, it would be better for this popular uprising, backed by the military, to succeed and the Muslim Brotherhood withers away. But that is not going to happen... Basically Israel can live with the fallout, except maybe a complete victory by Mursi... and if Iran decides to provide massive support to the jihadists in Sinai. That is the worst-case scenario for Israel right now. 😞
In the introductory meeting, Barun related that he was a top executive for the McDonald’s corporation for nearly three decades, overseeing its extensive charitable operations worldwide, before joining Dr. Billy Graham’s ministry in Charlotte, North Carolina, which is now headed by his son Franklin Graham.

The encounter also included a discussion on the solidarity which the Graham family has always felt for Israel.

ICEJ hosts reception for Yad Vashem staff

Seven years ago, the ICEJ partnered with Yad Vashem to establish a Christian Desk at the revered institution, which is dedicated to preserving the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust. This partnership has served its purpose well since then, and in order to deepen it further the Christian Embassy invited Shaya Ben-Yehuda, director general of the International Relations Division at Yad Vashem, and his staff for a luncheon and briefing on our work in early July. The interaction between the ICEJ and Yad Vashem staff was warm and meaningful, and the Embassy leadership gave a presentation on the history and current activities of the ICEJ. All agreed such receptions should become a regular event between the two organizations.

Visit from Robert Stearns

Rev. Robert Stearns of Eagles Wings Ministries recently paid a visit to the ICEJ headquarters in Jerusalem and gave a devotional teaching to the Embassy staff. Widely known as a dynamic worship leader and strong supporter of Israel, Stearns spent a brief stint on the ICEJ staff in Jerusalem back in the 1980s.
I feel such joy to reaffirm to all of us afresh this timely truth - that our God has everything under control! This relates to both the nations and in our personal lives! We need to be constantly reminded of this in order to intercede in full peace, faith and assurance.

God is in charge of His world
The Lord has never stepped outside human history or away from His creation, but is actively taking part in it and ruling in His world!

The Bible says God sends out His command and it rains or snows or the winds blow or it is hot. All of this is under His fresh word, which He sends out again and again (Psalm 147:15-18). We also are told He has set angels in control of the four winds of the earth (Revelation 7:1). So He is in full control of nature at all times!

It is the Lord God who is ruling and reigning over His creation, the nations and every living human being in this world! And He is doing so according to His character.

God’s character
It is so encouraging and glorious to know that our God is so gracious, full of compassion, slow to anger, great in mercy, good to all and that His tender mercies are over all His works (Psalm 145:8-9). Never lose sight of this!

This “multitude of tender mercies” was exactly the place deep in the heart of God where King David always fled through prayer and intercession and found refuge and salvation.

Filled with this assurance of the very goodness of God, we are then to look into

The holy prophets of old - Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel - carried the word of the Lord in their mouths that fully controlled both the destinies of Israel and of surrounding nations. The New Testament also affirms that truly it is God Himself who has determined the pre-appointed times and the boundaries of all the nations (Acts 17:26).

The Bible beautifully describes how God is actively involving Himself deep in the heart of a believer, working in him or her “both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). And even more so, the Bible declares that the Lord knows everything that is going on in us, both inwardly in our thoughts and emotions and will, and outwardly in our circumstances in life (Psalm 139; Acts 17:28).
the world and perceive how the holiness and righteousness of God is also being manifested and worked out, as seen in the destinies of nations and in the lives of individuals.

The Apostle Paul puts it this way: “Consider the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22). We are to fear the Lord! We are to remember there is heaven and hell! Jesus came into this world as the Word of God in bodily form and He is the express image of God’s person, full of both grace and truth (John 1:14; Hebrews 1:3).

Never lose heart!
So now when the Middle East seems in endless turmoil, do not lose heart. Just the opposite! Be reminded afresh that it is God who is sitting on the throne and is actively working out His purposes! He is faithful in all His words and holy in all His works.

The glory of the Lord will eventually be seen in the salvation of the nation of Israel. The promised Messiah will eventually come from heaven and restore justice in the earth. True godly peace, harmony and prosperity will eventually come and will be experienced by the nations under King Jesus, who will be sitting on the Davidic throne in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 3:17; Zechariah 14:16; Psalm 47). This is the direction where the world is going!

Trust and pray
Keep on interceding for Israel and the surrounding nations and lift up again and again the hearts of the leaders of the nations to the throne room of God! We have been commanded to do so (1 Timothy 2:1-6). Even though we do not understand everything, let us trust in Him!

Trust Him now, even as mass protests in the streets of Egypt have removed president Mohamed Morsi and the country remains in a state of great uncertainty and confusion. Trust Him now, even though Syria is going through a bloody civil war and Lebanon is in danger of being dragged into it. Trust Him now, even while Iran continues to pursue nuclear weapons unabated and threaten Israel and the West.

Trust Him now, for it is God who has everything under control!

Rev. Juha Ketola
International Director

SO NOW WHEN THE MIDDLE EAST SEEMS IN ENDLESS TURMOIL, DO NOT LOSE HEART. JUST THE OPPOSITE! BE REMINDED AFRESH THAT IT IS GOD WHO IS SITTING ON THE THRONE AND IS ACTIVELY WORKING OUT HIS PURPOSES!

PRAYER POINTS

1. Praise the Lord and rejoice that He is sitting on the throne and is in full control of events in the nations, in nature and in your life. Praise Him that He has a purpose, plan and direction where He is taking our world and your own life as well. Nothing will refresh and energize your communication with God like praising Him!

2. Pray for the leadership of Israel to be a blessing to their nation and the surrounding countries - Proverbs 21:1; 1 Timothy 2:1-6.


5. Finally, pray for the ICEJ, for the Lord to release His resources, people and finances for His glory to be seen and experienced in Israel through our ministry. Israel needs labourers both in the nations and in the land for God’s purposes - Matthew 9:37-38; 2 Corinthians 8:3-5, 9:13; Isaiah 60:5.
ISRAEL IN THE SUMMER
It’s hot. And it’s fun.

ISRAEL IS A LAND OF STARTLING CONTRASTS that may take a little getting used to at first. For most people on the outside looking in, Israel is the Holy Land, the place of the patriarchs, prophets, Ruth and Boaz, King David and Jesus. Israel is also a modern nation that is hated by its neighbors and requires high-level round-the-clock security. But for locals? Summer in Israel may be hot, but it is also a time for fun. The places in our Bible and in the headlines are also places of recreation and rejuvenation for the people of Israel.

Though things are heating up in the region, Israelis of all ages are quick to take appropriate action. For example, kids are heading to the malls in droves to buy up snorkels, swim masks, noodles and beach balls, all for keeping cool in city pools and at the sea shore. In the same shopping centers, their mothers and fathers are lining up to get chemical gas masks and new filters for the ones they already have. Swim masks and gas masks. This is the way it is when it is hot.

In the summer, beaches on the Mediterranean, the Sea of Galilee and the Red Sea are loaded with Israeli kids, young people, and families, and they are happy. They are building fortresses in the sand, tossing Frisbees and flying kites. There’s also a lot of fishing to do, water-skiing, hang gliding and if you are by the Red Sea, swimming with the dolphins and scuba-diving in coral reefs. All the while, Israel’s Navy silently cruise the oceanic coastlines, vigilant and protective.

As the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) fortifies the border with Sinai at Israel’s southernmost city Eilat, jazz enthusiasts from all over the world are preparing to attend the annual Summer Jazz Festival. Music will fill the night in a city where the average August high is 104. It is the hottest jazz in the world.

Towns and cities under the hot Israeli sun come alive after supper, when the sun is going down. Playgrounds that were empty in the white-hot heat of the day teem with children playing, while parents keep watch. Joggers are out, as well as mountain bikers and power walkers. Meanwhile, Israeli security forces are also keeping watch. Israelis see them. But not really—they are just out to enjoy the evening.

Israel’s leaders are engaged in intense discussions regarding the threat of a nuclear Iran and Israel’s security and defense needs. These high-level international talks allow for negotiations of another kind. Israeli children fervently bargain with their parents for ice cream, slushies, more Bamba (the hottest-selling snack in all Israel), a trip to the Jerusalem Zoo, or a week at their favorite summer day camp.

Christians around the world associate the Sea of Galilee with Jesus, the promised Messiah who offers rest for our souls (Matthew 11:29). Israelis too, associate the Kinneret (the name they call it) with rest. In the summer, all around the rim of the sea that Jesus loved, are tents, campers, fire pits, outdoor BBQs, picnics, sun-bathers and teens skipping rocks off the shores near Capernaum.

Likewise, the Holy City of Jerusalem has a special place in the heart of all Christians. But if you walk Jerusalem’s streets on a hot summer afternoon, you just may see little Orthodox Jewish boys filling their kippas (their skull caps) with water from the fountain and dumping them on each other’s heads. Isn’t that what kippas are for? It’s so hot.

Zechariah foresaw this day. “The streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls at play” (Zechariah 8:5). Israel is the Holy Land, it is the land of the Bible. So too, it is a country that has neighbors who hate her. These things we know. But Israel is also a homeland for a people who enjoy their country to the fullest, the places Bible-believing Christians revere, pray for and defend.

The Bible predicted this and we are seeing it in our day. Kayaking on the Jordan? Water-skiing on the Sea of Galilee? Praise the Lord. The people are playing there. They are having fun, even when it’s hot.

Dr. Carrie Burns is the Educational Programs Developer for the US Branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.
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