THE PARADOX OF ISRAEL

BY DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER // ICEJ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP

FRENCH JEWS ANSWER CALL TO COME HOME

ICEJ TIMELINE
LOOKING BACK OVER THREE DECADES OF ICEJ
Dear friends,

I just returned with my family from a ministry trip to Europe. We had wonderful meetings in Germany and Finland and were greatly blessed to see the people hungry to hear God’s word in both countries. What encouraged me in particular was an Isaiah 62 prayer meeting we attended in Stuttgart, Germany. For one-and-a-half years, this monthly meeting has grown to over 200 people, who gather every first Wednesday of the month to pray for Israel. The chapel that evening was packed and people were standing for lack of space. But most importantly, God’s presence was there in a most powerful way. People did not come to be entertained but to pray and worship God. Simultaneously, in some 25 other cities across Germany many more churches joined us in prayer as they do every month.

These prayer meetings around the world have become the muscle and backbone of our ministry. Many new doors are opening because of prayer and I know they do have an impact here in Israel and in the neighboring countries. Our prayer initiative is called the Isaiah 62 Prayer Campaign as this prophetic chapter defines our vision in prayer: “For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns.” (Isaiah 62:1)

This passage clearly states when we all can stop praying, when Israel’s spiritual restoration has become so bright that it can be seen around the world like a brilliant shining lamp. Until then, we continue praying and invite you to please join us! Especially if you are a pastor, I want to encourage you to open a regular Isaiah 62 prayer meeting in your church. It will become a blessing for Israel and for your church, too.

The ongoing and dramatic events in Egypt, Syria and Iraq should cause us to pray for the region like never before. Again, I want to remind you of the great hope which we can draw from the word of God as we read Isaiah 19. God declares that He is moving into Egypt for the purpose of bringing that great nation to a point where He can say about it: “Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands.” Please pray in particular for the believers there, who have become the targets of recent Islamist attacks.

Finally, it is not too late to register for the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. I would love to see you here! To register visit:  http://feast.icej.org

May the Lord bless you out of Zion!

DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER
ICEJ Executive Director
Feast Review 2013
We will have a full report on the ICEJ’s Feast of Tabernacles 2013 in Jerusalem. We are expecting another exciting and anointed Feast gathering with thousands of pilgrims from all over the world. The next magazine will have excerpts of messages from our high-profile roster of Feast speakers and reports of our interaction with Israeli leaders and the whole nation.

To learn more about the upcoming Feast of Tabernacles visit:  http://feast.icej.org
THE PARADOX OF ISRAEL
You might think the Apostle Paul was forgetful or confused. Twice within that chapter he asks the same question: Do the Jews still matter? And yet he responds each time in a different way – giving two answers that could not be farther from each other.

One question – two replies

At the start of this passage, Paul asks: “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the value of circumcision?” (Romans 3:1) His answer is straightforward and absolutely positive: “Much in every way!” (Romans 3:2) Or as Robertson translates it, “much from every angle!” This is a strong affirmation for all friends of Israel. Yes, the Jewish people are still unique, they still matter to God, and it is worthwhile supporting them.

But then just eight verses later, Paul asks the same question again. “What then? Are we Jews then better off than the gentiles?” (Romans 3:9 ESV) The Greek text allows us to read it thus: “Do we Jews now have an advantage?”

Now you might be tempted to tell Paul that he just asked this question a few verses beforehand. Did he forget? Does he need to re-read his earlier words? Yet Paul’s answer here leaves the reader perplexed. He totally contradicts his previous statement with – again – a head-on reply: “No, not at all!”

“Much in every way!” ... “No, not at all!”

It is hard to disagree with oneself more than that. What happened to Paul between verse 1 and verse 9 that he changed his mind so quickly?

A Church divided

The truth is that these two disparate answers very much define the Church today when it comes to Israel. You can ask seminary professors, pastors and church-goers the question: “What is so special about Israel and the Jews?” The response you will hear today ranges from one pole to the other. Some will say: “Much in every way! Yes the church needs to support Israel!” Others will insist: “No, nothing at all! They need Jesus just like any other people do.”

There is hardly another topic on which the Church is more divided than on Israel. I experienced this just recently in a church in Europe.

As I arrived to do the Sunday sermon, the Israel-enthusiasts welcomed me warmly, saying: “We really hope our pastor will listen to you, as he does not understand Israel at all.”

A few minutes later the pastor greeted me. “Welcome to our church!” he said. Pointing to the group of Israel-enthusiasts, he added: “I don’t understand these people. They just don’t get it that the Jews are a normal people like everybody else who just need to get saved.”

Here it was again – “Much in every way!” and “No, not at all!” – sitting in the very same worship service. And these are found in countless churches all around the world. Both sides can quote Paul and both can give biblical reasoning for their stand. But who is right?

A coin with two sides

Both are right, and the problem arises only when believers choose one answer to the exclusion of the other. Many Christian friends of Israel know Romans 3:1-2 by heart, but they struggle to accept Paul’s second answer in verse nine. The other side full-heartedly agrees with Romans 3:9 but struggles with Paul’s answer in verse two.

The truth is that Paul does not contradict himself but offers two sides of the very same coin. Every Christian needs to consider both sides of this coin and be able to handle the paradox of Israel in both ways, as Paul did.
Both answers do not contradict each other but rather complement one other.

‘Much in every way’

Paul’s initial question (“Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?”) arises from his assertion in the preceding chapter that being Jewish is more a state of the heart than an ethnic identification (Romans 2:26-29). According to Paul, there are uncircumcised gentiles who live godly lives and appear to be more “Jewish” than some natural descendants of Abraham. If this is true the question indeed is: ‘Is there then an advantage in being Jewish?’ Some Christians today would flatly reject that, noting that Paul just stated there is no advantage whatsoever in being Jewish, since it is a matter of the heart.

But Paul’s answer strongly affirms the national calling of Israel and he stresses one particular facet of their calling: “Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were entrusted the oracles of God.” (Romans 3:2).

God’s private secretary

Paul then explains that there is indeed a national calling over the Jews which is different to any other people group. To the Jews were entrusted the “oracles of God.” The Bible is a very Jewish document. It was authored by Jews and it has been largely preserved by them in its original language. The writers were Hebrew prophets, kings, shepherds and priests. As they wrote down what God placed on their hearts they never could have imagined that they were writing the greatest bestseller of all times, which would eventually be translated into thousands of languages.

A striking example is Jeremiah. God prompts the prophet to write a message for Jehoiakim, King of Israel (Jeremiah 36). The prophet sends his servant Baruch to deliver the scroll. However, the king does not like the call to repentance from the bothersome seer and throws the scroll into the fire. As Baruch returns to Jeremiah he reports to his master that his message was not well received in the king’s palace and the scroll was destroyed.

Now Jeremiah might have felt disappointed, but God asked him to rewrite the message on a new parchment. Why? Because the message was not only for the King of Israel but also for the President of Russia, for the car salesman in Oklahoma, for the nurse in Berlin and for the law student in Manila. The Bible is a global message, which shows all humanity the way to God, and it was given to humanity through the Jewish people. Rev. Malcolm Hedding, the ICEJ’s former executive director, has often said Israel is “God’s private secretary.”

“He declares His word to Jacob. His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation.” (Psalm 147:19)

Isn’t it amazing that right up to the very last pages of the Bible, Jesus still affirms that even in heaven, with a glorified body, he remains the Lion of the Tribe of Judah DNA of Israel’s calling to Abraham. “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Genesis 12:3)

That is why God chose the Jewish people, not for themselves but to be a blessing for the whole world. Because of this unique calling, Paul affirms that there is an advantage to being a Jew in the flesh - “much in every way!”

But he also realizes that people will immediately challenge him with a counter argument: “But Paul you have forgotten, that the Jews did not accept their Messiah.” Paul confronts exactly this contention in the following verse: “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? (Romans 3:3)” Will Israel’s unfaithfulness annul God’s covenant with her? Has their rejection of the Messiah made God change His mind about Israel? And because of their rebellion, has the Church replaced Israel as the people of God?

Paul again does not mince words. “Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar ...” (Romans 3:4)

God never changed His mind with regards to Israel. Even if they should become persecutors of the Church and “enemies of the Gospel”, God still considers them “beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” (Romans 11:28-29)

No doubt, God is a covenant-keeping God!

‘Not at all’

Yet after all this, how could Paul then come to his answer in verse nine: “No, not at all”?

When Paul replies to his first question so positively, he is referencing the national calling over the Jewish people. When Paul poses the question a second time, he has another perspective in mind – that of the individual.

The question could be formulated: “Recognizing the national and irrevocable calling of Israel, does this give a Jewish person an advantage before God?” Or, “Will Jews automatically
Paul’s answer is again straightforward: “Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.” (Romans 3:9)

The German Chancellor Angela Merkel recently said in an address before pastors and Christian leaders: “Before God I am not the Chancellor, but a human.” This is what Paul says regarding the Jewish people. Regardless of their unique and privileged collective calling, before God the individual Jew stands on an equal level like any other person in this world.

‘All have sinned’
Paul proves this case by using a long selection of Jewish scriptures. The most powerful statement he finds in the Book of Psalms from the greatest King that Israel ever had: “The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.” (Psalm 14:2-3)

With this in mind, Paul then arrives at the climax of his argument and the very core of the Gospel message: “For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith…” (Romans 3:22-25)

Being Jewish, therefore, does not bring you automatically to heaven but requires forgiveness of sin just like any other person.

A key for blessing
Therefore to the question “What is the advantage of the Jews?”, both answers are right. “Much in every way,” because of the unique national calling which God placed upon His people. They were irrevocably called to bless humanity with the word of God and the Messiah, and the gentile Church needs to consider themselves as debtors to the Jews and must bless them in return (Romans 15:27). But then with regards to personal salvation, it also true what the pastor said to me that Sunday morning: “Jews are a normal people like everybody else who need to get saved.”

Paul, therefore, did not contradict himself but gives us a balanced perspective to a complex subject and we all should strive to follow and understand his viewpoint. If we succeed in this, the Church will not be so divided into two camps of the “much in every way-ers” and the “not at all-ers!” If we embrace both sides of the coin, it can become a much needed step to bring the two groups together with a common confession. This will not only be a huge blessing for Israel but for the Church as well.

May God help us in this!

**JEWISH MEN dancing on Simchat Torah**

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**DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER**

is an ordained minister and trained physicist who serves as Executive Director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.
THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT RISE in the number of French Jews making aliyah to Israel this year and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was privileged to sponsor airline seats for 68 new immigrants arriving on a flight from Paris in late July organized by the Jewish Agency for Israel.

In total there were 375 French Jews making the move to Israel that day, part of a wave that is expected to reach 2,500 new olim in 2013 – up 40% from the number of immigrants from France last year.

Many reports have attributed the recent surge in French aliyah to the rising anti-Semitism in Europe, especially the threat of violence against Jews from Muslim extremists, as well as the lagging economies of Europe. But at a farewell ceremony in Paris for some 800 French Jews preparing to depart for Israel this summer, Natan Sharansky, chairman of the Jewish Agency, chose to emphasize the draw of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people and the better job prospects here.

An ICEJ delegation was at Ben-Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv to help welcome some of the new French arrivals sponsored by our ministry, and they gave yet another reason for deciding to come to Israel.

Mordechai, from Paris, said he had dreamed of coming to Israel
for a decade but decided to come at this time because he believes it is time for “Messiah Now!”

Sadja, a businessman and father of two from the Paris area, said he simply felt the call of God to come now. His wife’s father, a resident of Jerusalem, was there to welcome him home.

Among the others waiting for the new arrivals was Shmuel, a Jewish teenager whose family already moved from France eight years ago to the settlement of Eli, in the heart of Samaria. He said the community was excited about taking in several new French families and had sent a group to help welcome them to Israel.

Meanwhile, Frederick said he came simply because “this is my place, my home.”

Dr. Misha Galperin, a senior official with the Jewish Agency, expressed his thankfulness to the Christian Embassy for sponsoring flights for the French newcomers.

“The Jewish Agency is profoundly grateful to the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem for your significant support of our aliyah and absorption activities”, he stated. “This important investment will be instrumental in keeping Israel’s promise as a safe haven and thriving homeland for all Jews.”

Please join with us to assist more Jewish families from France and many other countries in coming home to Israel.

Please give today to this special ICEJ Aliyah operation at: http://us.icej.org/donate/bnei-menashe
ICEJ SPONSORS FOOD VAN TO FEED THOUSANDS

BY BIRTE SCHOLZ

"ISRAEL, YOU ARE NOT ALONE!"

That’s the message emblazoned on the side of a new van sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem which distributes food to needy Israeli families on a daily basis in the greater Tel Aviv area.

Over the past three years, ICEJ AID has leased a van that distributed tons of food and clothing to thousands of impoverished families. The van was kept so busy and put in so many miles that a new vehicle had to be leased to continue meeting the needs. The brand new van was rolled out recently with the ICEJ logo and our message of comfort displayed in Hebrew on each side: “Israel, you are not alone!”

The van is serving the needs of 4,000 impoverished families each year. Most of the goods being distributed are donated by produce and clothing companies from all over the country.

“Without these vans we would not be able to continue our humanitarian mission”, assured Nissim Zioni, director of the local charity Pitchon Lev which operates the food delivery service. “We are sincerely grateful to the Christian Embassy for leasing this van for another three years.”

As the van travels around central Israel, every day the drivers encounter ordinary Israelis that inquire about the International Christian Embassy and are excited to learn of Christians who care deeply for their nation.

The families who are being fed are also very grateful for the assistance. One such family has a heart-rending story.

Nir lost his wife to a serious illness last year. She was the mother of five small children, including an infant still in diapers. Nir was forced to quit his job in order to take care of the children. So while the family was dealing with the loss and sorrow, the worries about daily living and provision for the family grew. But our van is now regularly delivering food as well as toys and clothing for the children, which has greatly encouraged this struggling family.

You can help us sustain Israeli families like this in great need.

Please give to ICEJ AID at: www.icejusa.org/aid

DISTRIBUTING FOOD to needy Israeli families on a daily basis in the greater Tel Aviv area
OVER RECENT DECADES, much of south Tel Aviv has become plagued with crime, drugs and prostitution. In an area bordered by an industrial zone, the city’s old bus station and the mixed Arab-Jewish neighborhood of Old Jaffa, Israel’s toughest streets are home to small shops and businesses but also brothels and drug hang-outs.

This reality cannot be swept under the rug, and in recent years the International Christian Embassy has partnered with a special ministry outreach in south Tel Aviv that seeks to rescue women trapped in prostitution and looking for a way out. Most of these women are held captive by their oppressors, by addictions to drugs, and worst of all by their own mind-set. Many have forgotten what a better life can look like, but they have no other means to support themselves.

To provide a way of escape, ICEJ AID has worked together with local believers in establishing a beauty salon that has become a safe haven for them to feel welcome and to talk about their lives. Prostitutes come to the ‘Red Carpet’ center for manicures and pedicures, to fix their hair and to receive a hot meal. But most importantly, they finally have a chance to talk to someone who cares for them and many of the women allow someone to pray for them.

These are not actresses from the movie Pretty Woman who find love in the streets. None of them want to be there. Many have AIDS or other diseases. They fix their hair to cover weary faces, and use drugs to numb the pain inside. But at Red Carpet they find something that no customer has ever offered: unconditional love.

Volunteers at the beauty center show these women respect and assure them that things can be better. Besides our funding, several ICEJ staff members have joined the volunteer team as well, helping with beauty treatments and serving meals.

Through ICEJ AID, you can impact lives still trapped in this degrading form of slavery. Currently we are in need of finances to purchase an apartment where the women can receive more long-term care, feel safe from their male ‘owners’, and hopefully break free from the mean streets of Tel Aviv.
IN OVERSEEING THE ICEJ ARISE young adults program from our Jerusalem headquarters, Arise director Jani Salokangas has been busy over the past year creating and introducing the department’s exciting new on-line magazine AriseNow, as well as launching the weekly radio show AriseBase, among other activities. But Jani also is invited to speak in ICEJ branches worldwide, to share about the Arise program with young Christians and also to minister to believers of all ages.

One recent ministry trip took Jani to Fiji and the Philippines, in the Pacific Rim.

In Fiji, Jani taught in the cities of Suva and Nadi Nan, where he brought churches together under the umbrella of Arise and encouraged them to do great things in the Kingdom of God. The meetings became a platform to bring numerous Christian young leaders, youth pastors and young adults together from different ministries and denominations. He challenged the audience on the importance of their choices as young adults. Dozens of young people responded to the call to re-connect their lives to God.

“At the closing of the preaching, these young ones were weeping openly”, reported ICEJ-Fiji administrator Ana Soqeta. “I was deeply touched when at the altar call almost all who came up front were in tears. Some came for re-dedication, while others waited to freshly surrender their lives to the Lord.”

The nation of Fiji is under weighty challenges with a self-appointed leader whose agenda is unclear and drawing international scrutiny. Despite the obstacles facing the young people of Fiji, the church is a strong and vital part of Fijian society.

“Your choices are your voice. Some voices can be heard, but too many are on mute”, Jani told the Fijian youth. He encouraged them to realize that great power has been given to Christians when they choose to work in unity despite their differences. With such a message, Arise is challenging young Christians to live fearless lives before God.

In the earlier visit to the Philippines, ICEJ Arise was able to connect with numerous ministries and preach in a series of churches. God is moving in unprecedented ways in the Philippines, especially among the young adults. The Arise youth meetings were filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit and a powerful atmosphere of worship. This helped open the doors to one new church venue which holds 10,000 people.

“Our aim is to teach discipleship and touch the hearts of the next generation of the Philippines”, related the church’s pastor, Ricky Santhoroum.

God is truly amplifying the voice of our young generation. To learn more about our work with ICEJ Arise, please be in touch at arise@icej.org. Or visit our website at www.arisegeneration.org
AriseBase

The AriseBase Show is an inspiring radio show airing weekly from the city of the Great King, Jerusalem. Through interesting discussions and encouraging devotions, the show seeks to equip young believers from across the globe, while at the same time offering the latest news from Israel and the Christian world. For more information visit www.arisegeneration.org

AriseNow

AriseNow is a quarterly magazine aimed to encourage and educate young believers from all walks of life. Through its wide variety of articles it is aiming to inspire, challenge and educate young people all over the world. The latest issue contains updates on the worldwide work of Arise, interviews with Miss Israel 2013, the Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Naomi Tsur, plus a whole lot of other interesting material. For more information visit www.arisegeneration.org
ONE OF THE CORE MANDATES of the International Christian Embassy can be found in Jeremiah 31:10: “Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.’”

Besides blessing and comforting the people of Israel, God has given us a clear mandate to speak to the Church worldwide about what He is doing in Israel. We have pursued this calling through our ministry travels and our publications, which currently reach over 140 nations.

But in the beginning of 2012, the Lord truly challenged us to reach out more effectively to the world. He spoke through Matthew 5:15: “Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.”

God challenged us to place our light on a higher lampstand. The lampstands of our day are the means of mass communication – internet, social media and television. At that time, God opened a door for us to join an Israeli news show called “Israel Now News” which is broadcast globally on Daystar TV. Since then, every single show closes with a special 5 minute episode produced by the ICEJ, called “ICEJ Report.” Though this new vehicle, we now can reach out on a weekly basis to literally millions of believers around the world, and we are feeling its impact throughout our global network of branches.

Since then, our video production team has grown significantly and today we feel that God is leading us one step beyond. Earlier this year, we were offered the opportunity to enter a unique partnership with God-TV to produce a weekly half-hour show from and about Israel, which will be shown on a prime spot during weekends.

This will enable us to convey much more effectively what God has placed on our heart to say. Each show will include Bible teachings about Israel coming straight from Jerusalem, updates about Israel and the Middle East, and information about our ministry. The name of the TV show will be the same as the magazine you now hold in your hands – Word from Jerusalem.

This is indeed a prophetic mandate to declare God’s purposes from here in Jerusalem to the ends of the world. The signal of God-TV now reaches close to 400 million households worldwide, which translates into a potential viewership of close to one billion people. What excites us most is that it reaches into countries on every single continent, including many Muslim nations. And yes, it even reaches the “isles afar off” in the Pacific Ocean, which are the greatest distance possible from Israel. This show will open doors for us which have never been open before. We will be able to reach more people in the coming year than through all our many travels until now. It is truly a door that has opened widely!

If you want to partner with us as we walk through this new open door, please consider supporting our TV outreach. In the coming year we will need US$ 250,000 to take this new step of faith. Please prayerfully consider placing a financial seed into this important outreach. Your seed will ensure that millions of people around the world will hear what God is doing in Israel today. It will enable us to equip the Church worldwide with a better understanding of God’s purposes for Israel. But also, please pray that His anointing will rest upon us to communicate clearly and with authority the word of God.
ICEJ SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP

ICEJ EXPLORING LANDMARK PARTNERSHIP WITH TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
BY DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER, ICEJ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OVER RECENT YEARS God has placed on our hearts to pray for a deeper connection to the academic world in Israel. Then in December last year, we were surprised to receive an invitation to meet with the heads of Tel Aviv University.

In our conversation we highlighted the fact that most Israelis are not aware of the dramatic changes which have taken place in Christianity in modern times and the increased interest among Christians in standing with Israel. Some Israelis still think all Christians follow the pope. Others may know about the sad history of Christian anti-Semitism, but they know little about the rising trend of Christian support for Israel.

So over the course of this year, the leadership of the Christian Embassy has been in discussions with the president of Tel Aviv University about the need for greater understanding among the Israeli public concerning modern Christianity and the potential which the expanding Evangelical movement has to impact many nations and especially their policies and attitudes towards Israel.

The International Christian Embassy enjoys a unique vantage point from which to view the Christian world, as our ministry headquarters in Jerusalem are daily connected to our vast global network of national branches. We can attest that indeed the Church of Jesus Christ is growing all over the world and there is a massive wellspring of support for Israel among evangelical Christians worldwide.

Our approach has intrigued the university’s president, Prof. Joseph Klafter, who now agrees that this is an area in need of deeper research and greater awareness, especially in Israel. Thus, the head of Tel Aviv University has expressed to us his willingness to establish a Chair for the Study of Contemporary Christianity, a move that would be rare for an established university anywhere and even more unusual that an Israeli institution of higher learning would do so. Yet besides their general academic interest, Tel Aviv University’s faculty also is now eager to grasp more fully what impact the growing Evangelical movement could have on Israel’s standing politically, diplomatically, economically and in many other ways.

To establish such a research chair would require a contribution to the university’s endowment of US$500,000. The Christian Embassy is convinced this special study program would be an important landmark in Jewish-Christian relations and is needed to better understand our own movement and to further educate Israeli leaders, the media and the public about our support and concern for them.

We also are certain that Tel Aviv University is the right partner for this special venture. It is rated as one of the top 50 universities worldwide, has Israel’s largest enrolment of local and international students, enjoys a reputation as being on the cutting-edge of medical and scientific research, and has professional affiliations with some of the most brilliant academics in the world.

To explore this opportunity further, the ICEJ and Tel Aviv University will be co-hosting a special symposium in early December to better define the parameters of this field of study. Invited speakers will include Prof. Philip Jenkins of Baylor University, author of the recently acclaimed work The Next Christendom, and Dr. William Wilson, the newly appointed president of Oral Roberts University. ☎️

If you are interested in being a source of funding for this unique and essential study program at Tel Aviv University, please contact us at icejusa@icejusa.org
THE HISTORY & PURPOSE OF THE ICEJ

BY DAVID PARSONS
FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been the vanguard of Christian Zionism worldwide, a constant expression in Jerusalem of this ever-growing global movement of Christians in our day who share a love and concern for Israel and the Jewish people. The ICEJ represents churches, denominations and millions of Christians around the world who seek to repair the historic breach between the Church and the Jewish people. We also recognize in the modern-day restoration of Israel the faithfulness of God to keep His ancient covenant promises to the Jewish people.

The name of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem arose from the unique set of circumstances that accompanied our founding 33 years ago. In the summer of 1980, the Knesset had passed the Jerusalem Law, which declared the reunited city of Jerusalem the eternal capital of Israel. This enraged the nations, just as Zechariah 12:2-3 had foretold, and the Arab oil powers threatened an embargo against any country which still had an embassy in Jerusalem.

Under the pressure of this oil embargo, the last 13 embassies in Jerusalem packed up and relocated to Tel Aviv. Not one nation was willing to stand with the 3,000 year-old Jewish claim and connection to Jerusalem. Yet just as Israelis were feeling isolated and alone in the world, over 1,000 Christians from 40 nations were gathering in Jerusalem for the first public Christian celebration of the biblical Feast of Tabernacles. During this week-long gathering, the delegates decided to leave behind a permanent representation of their solidarity and support for Israel. Thus the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem was established in the presence of the beloved Mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, on 30 September 1980.

Today, the ICEJ has a staff of some 50 people in its Jerusalem headquarters, as well as branch offices in over 70 nations and a reach into more than 140 countries worldwide.

From its inception the ICEJ has sought to challenge the Church to take up its scriptural responsibilities towards the Jewish people, to remind Israel of the wonderful promises made to her in the Bible, and to be a source of practical assistance and comfort to all the people of the land of Israel.

The ICEJ still sponsors the Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem each fall, which quickly grew into Israel's largest annual tourist event. The ICEJ has also assisted nearly 120,000 Jews in making aliyah to Israel. In addition, the Christian Embassy has sponsored humanitarian projects in nearly every community and among all the peoples of the Land of Israel - whether Jewish, Arab, Christian, Muslim, Druze or Bedouin. These are just some of our many activities.

Our main objectives are:

To stand with Israel in practical expressions of support and friendship

To teach the Church worldwide regarding God’s purposes concerning Israel and to link churches with Israel

To support local churches in the Holy Land

To be an active channel of reconciliation between Jews, Arabs and Christians

The ICEJ invites you to partner with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide. We are your Embassy in Jerusalem!
ICEJ
INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN EMBASSY
JERUSALEM

33 YEAR TIMELINE
Join us in taking a look back at just a few of the historical events that have helped shape ICEJ.

1980
The Beginning
The opening of the International Christian Embassy.

1981
Mordechai Outcry
During Easter of 1981 the Christian Embassy organized demonstrations around the world in support of imprisoned Soviet Jews and Prisoners of Zion, equating them with the situation of Mordechai and Queen Esther and the Jews of Persia long ago. The photo shows banners used at the demonstration in Washington DC.

1985
Zionist Congress
ICEJ hosts the first Christian Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in the same hall as the first Zionist Congress convened by Herzl in 1897.

1980s
AID Work
From the start, the ICEJ reached out to all the peoples in the land of Israel with social aid projects, particularly in order to “comfort” the Jewish people. Here Jewish and Arab deaf children receive new bicycles from the Christian Embassy.

1990
Aliyah to Israel
The ICEJ began to assist Jewish people from the former USSR to come to Israel. The first ICEJ sponsored flight landing at Ben Gurion Airport, May 1990.

1991
First Gulf War
When Iraqi Scud missiles began falling on Tel Aviv, the ICEJ was the first on the scene to provide emergency assistance to families whose homes were destroyed.

1980

1985

1990

1991
2001

The Covenant

The Covenant, a colorful biblical drama that recounts the miraculous story of the People of Israel, was first performed during the Feast of Tabernacles in 2001.

2004

Christian Allies' Caucus

The ICEJ, along with other Christian Zionist ministries, was invited to participate with Knesset members in the Christian Allies' Caucus.

2008

Feast Draws Record Crowd

Almost 8,000 Christian pilgrims from nearly 100 countries took part in the ICEJ's annual celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, shattering all previous records in the event's 29-year history and defying the downturn in the global markets.

1992

Dramatic Rescue in Moldova

When the Jews of Moldova were caught in the crossfire of a regional conflict, the Jewish Agency asked the ICEJ to help evacuate them. The ICEJ-sponsored bus teams did not hesitate, although they were hundreds of kilometers away and the risks were serious. The team proceeded into the war torn region of Trans-Dniester and over a period of 3 weeks carried about 400 Jewish refugees to safety.

1996

3rd Zionist Congress

The ICEJ's Third Christian Zionist Congress, in February 1996, was a great encouragement to Israelis during the worst week of terror bombings the nation had yet faced.

2010

Holocaust Survivors Home

The ICEJ launches a unique project to expand an assisted-living facility in Haifa to house needy Holocaust survivors. Today there are some 80 elderly survivors living in the home, with all their needs taken care of by loving staff.

2013

Bnei Menashe Aliyah

The ICEJ sponsors the first flights of renewed Aliyah by the Bnei Menashe, an isolated tribe of Oriental Jews living in northeast India.
FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS now the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been building a proven record of doing good in the Land of Israel, and defending this nation around the world. Today, we are engaged in numerous programs and activities which carry on this honorable legacy as the world’s largest Christian Zionist ministry. Some of our current projects and events include:

Aliyah
Since 1990, the ICEJ has assisted more than 115,000 Jews in making aliyah to Israel. Most have come from Russian-speaking areas of the former Soviet Union where we continue our fishing and transportation efforts in cooperation with the Jewish Agency for Israel. But we also are assisting Jews from the West now wanting to move to Israel, including those from European countries who are being harassed and threatened by Muslim agitators. We continue to assist Ethiopian Jews who have made the difficult journey home and still need help integrating into Israeli society. And most recently, the ICEJ has begun sponsoring the flights of the Bnei Menashe tribe of Oriental Jews from northeast India as they seek to end 2700 years of exile.

Holocaust Survivors
Over recent years, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has felt an urgency to do more to help the thousands of Holocaust survivors in Israel who are struggling with illnesses and living in poverty. In 2010, we established a unique assisted-living facility in Haifa that has become a special place of warmth and loving care for nearly 80 Holocaust survivors in dire need of assistance. Each resident has their own dramatic story to tell of somehow surviving the Nazi genocide while still very young. Over the course of this project, we have acquired and renovated several nearby homes to provide a total of 30 permanent units for these special survivors.
buildings along the same Haifa street in order to expand this special facility, which now also houses a medical clinic, a dental clinic, an intensive hospice care unit, a synagogue and a community dining hall where residents receive hot meals each day. The Christian Embassy is continuing to raise funds to help operate the assisted-living home, and to renovate more apartments in surrounding buildings where additional Holocaust survivors can live.

**Education**

The Christian Embassy has been giving more emphasis in recent years to educational and other programs that seek to lift disadvantaged youths in Israel from the scourges of domestic violence, drugs and abject poverty, and give them a better chance to succeed in life. The ICEJ is assisting youths-at-risk by sponsoring educational and after-school activities designed to help them meet the many tough challenges at school and at home. Without our intervention, many could end up in a life of crime, drugs and violence. It is absolutely vital that these children receive our help before it is too late, and thankfully many young lives are being impacted for the better.

**Christian Friends of Yad Vashem**

In October 2006 the ICEJ joined with Yad Vashem, Israel’s official memorial and museum to the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust, in creating a special program for Christian Friends of Yad Vashem. This historic step has provided Yad Vashem an opening to the Christian world to teach about the Holocaust and help shape a brighter future for Jewish-Christian relations. Today, the Christian Desk at Yad Vashem promotes a wide range of activities, such as educating churches and Christian communities about the universal lessons of the Holocaust; building bridges between Christians and Jews; teaching on the history of Christian Anti-Semitism; and preserving the legacy of the Righteous among the Nations. CFYV also arranges more intensive Christian leadership seminars at Yad Vashem for pastors and other ministry leaders.

**Arab Outreach**

One of the areas of pressing need within Israel which the ICEJ is seeking to address is that of disadvantaged members of the minority Arab community, and particularly Arab Christian families. Some 20% of our AID budget is used to assist the Arab, Druze and Bedouin communities, including enrichment programs for children and youth-at-risk, medical and financial assistance to the elderly, holiday gift packages to poor families, and so much more. Some of the specific projects which we are currently sponsoring in the Arab sector include funding youth centers for Arab youths from disadvantaged families in the Galilee, working with local Arab churches to assist needy Christian families in Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem, and sponsoring co-existence projects which bring Jewish and Arab children together to learn tolerance and mutual acceptance.

**Israel in Crisis**

The nation of Israel has been forced to deal with many sudden crises over recent years. Last year we assisted those impacted by the trauma of war and terrorism during the Operation Pillar of Cloud, when Israel was forced to once again defend its citizens against rocket barrages from Gaza. We do not know when the next crisis will hit Israel, but it is a tremendous testimony when Christians are the first to arrive on the scene to help. Many victims suffer from physical or mental disabilities, emotional scars, loss of employment, extensive medical treatments or accumulated debts. The ICEJ will be there to provide immediate direct help and encouragement to those most impacted by crisis in Israel.

**ICEJ TV**

In recent years, the ICEJ has sensed a leading from the Lord to move more fully into video production in order to broadcast our message more widely on Christian television and via Web streaming. Last year, our *ICEJ Report* became part of the popular weekly show “Israel Now News”, aired on *Daystar TV*, the world’s largest Christian television network. The impact of this new venture is being felt at all levels of our ministry, and plans are underway to expand the reach of our video productions from Jerusalem. The ICEJ also produces the weekly radio program *FrontPage Jerusalem*, which airs on over 160 Christian radio stations in North America and worldwide. 📺
SERVING ISRAEL AND REACHING THE NATIONS

BY REV. JUHA KETOLA
INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR
To support Israel in prayer and with their financial giving and contributions in God’s dealings with Israel through its promised spiritual restoration! All Church in visible glory! Eventually, Israel shall be fully restored – and this includes its promised spiritual restoration! All Israel will be saved! (Ezekiel 36, Romans 11) The King of kings, Jesus, eventually will also restore justice among the nations and peace will come to the world! (Psalm 96, 98, Isaiah 2:1-4, Acts 17:31)

We have been called to link churches with Israel, to mobilize global prayer for Israel (see more about our Isaiah 62 Prayer Initiative on our website at www.icej.org), and to encourage willing believers to put their hands where their hearts are - that is, to be actively and practically involved in God’s dealings with Israel through their financial giving and contributions. To support Israel in prayer and with funds and resources from their respective home countries is truly a blessing for the followers of Jesus and for local churches in the nations. It is a blessing both to Israel and to those who sow into helping Israel reach her prophetic destiny (Genesis 12:3)! We say this in all humility and in all grace, but very boldly and are not ashamed to say so.

Staying faithful Within the past year, we have sent out speakers from Jerusalem to minister in over 30 nations, including several Muslim countries. This is in addition to all the work that our ICEJ national branches are doing in more than 70 countries worldwide. We endeavor to be faithful in our calling to raise global support for Israel!

As a worldwide ministry, we have a prominent physical presence in Jerusalem and a broad reach through our national branches around the world in order to be a bridge between the people of Israel and those concerned for her welfare among the gentiles. In the nations, there are many who have heard the voice of the Lord to bless Israel and many who have heard the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit to pray for her. Thus, we have been established as a ministry to serve as a vehicle for them to accomplish the godly desires of their hearts. This has been very rewarding and fulfilling!

Through our numerous practical projects in Israel, supported and made possible by our faithful partners in the nations, we are continuously showing the unconditional love and concern of Christians worldwide to the people of the Promised Land. Together with our global partners, we are love in action and a comforting gentle voice to God’s chosen people. Thus we have been able to establish a godly testimony in the Land, yet we dare ask more!

New Branches In the Bible we can find the beautiful prayer of Jabez, who asks the Lord to give him new turf and enlarge his sphere of influence so that he could more widely influence others for God (I Chronicles 4:9-10). This is exactly what we have been praying! Our goal is to establish 15 new national branches worldwide with a national director in place in each country within the five-year period of 2012 – 2017. These new branches will enable us to raise more support for Israel and to be a stronger witness and voice in the Land. We have already seen one third of this vision fulfilled and believe the remaining ten ICEJ national branches will be established in time.

The time is now! Now is the time for the Church in the nations to throw herself into God’s purposes for Israel more intensively and decisively for His Kingdom to come! Now is the time for us to be a bridge between the nations and Israel, connecting Christians with the Jewish people being re-gathered in the modern-day state of Israel!

Would you be one of their true modern-day friends, supporters and intercessors among the nations? Would you be one of the modern-day, graciously sold-out believers who have first given themselves to the Lord and then - by the will of God - to this cause and ministry? (II Corinthians 8:5)

We need you in this divine calling and mandate to serve in these momentous days the Jewish people and all Israeli citizens and to reach out to God’s people in the nations! Would you be one of the followers of Jesus in our day who hears His voice – and obeys it?

We are praying for you! 🙏
AN INTENSE American-led diplomatic push has finally succeeded in bringing Israeli and Palestinian officials together for the first direct peace talks in more than three years. But those talks have already hit some early snags and the level of optimism for a real breakthrough is extremely low on both sides.

US Secretary of State John Kerry has paid no less than six visits to the region in six months in an unrelenting effort to get the two sides back to the negotiating table. And in late July he finally broke the ice, hosting Israeli and Palestinian representatives in Washington for an initial round of direct talks.

The meetings marked a belated victory for the Obama administration, which during its first term managed to get the two sides together for a few brief hours in September 2009, but only after pressuring Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu into declaring a 10-month settlement freeze. Otherwise, the parties have not engaged in direct talks since Ehud Olmert was the Israeli premier, largely due to the stiff pre-conditions demanded by Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.

Over recent years, Abbas has insisted that Israel release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, accept the pre-1967 lines as the basis for talks, and declare a total freeze on Jewish building in Judea/Samaria and eastern Jerusalem. But Netanyahu resisted any attempt to pry out concessions ahead of talks.

Kerry managed to break the stand-off when Netanyahu recently agreed to release 104 Palestinian prisoners convicted of lethal terrorist acts in the pre-Oslo era (before 1993), but only in stages to ensure the Palestinians remain at the peace table. Abbas apparently conceded on his other demands, a move which did not sit well with the majority of his Fatah faction.

Still, some in Israel suspect the US forced Netanyahu to quietly agree to a settlement freeze and talks based on the pre-’67 lines. Some of this suspicion has arisen due to the veil of secrecy imposed over the talks.

Some reports have indicated, however, that the Palestinians want to first draw the permanent borders for a Palestinian state, while Israel wants to focus on security arrangements before deciding how much territory to give up. In either case, there are many other tough issues yet to decide, such as the Palestinians’ claim to a ‘right of return’ for millions of refugees and the fate of Jerusalem.

Given the many obstacles to a deal and the turmoil shaking the rest of the region, many view the American diplomatic focus on the Israeli-Palestinian front as an oddity. The civil war in Syria has claimed over 100,000 lives. Egypt is close to sliding into a civil war as well. And all the while, Iran is racing towards a nuclear weapons capability. So why the obsession with Palestinian grievances against Israel?

Israeli analysts suggest the Obama administration has decided to focus on the one issue in the region the US still has some sway over, in hopes that some progress there might restore Washington’s ability to impact other regional events.

“All things else is self-destructing, and the one product that Kerry can get his arms around as secretary of state is the Palestinian-Israeli crisis”, Dan Diker, former Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress, told ICEJ News. “It’s something that is known. It’s something that he has a dear friend in – namely Israel... But the question being asked by pundits and analysts alike is why the focus on this track when the rest of the region is going up in flames.”
“For the United States, the Palestinian file is one that is still open and there’s a certain inertia that it has to be closed”, explained Amb. Danny Ayalon, Israel’s former deputy foreign minister. “But based on my talks with many Arab leaders, including from the Gulf states, the best way to reassert American leadership and credibility in the region is to stop Iran… and the Palestinian conflict is almost a side issue in comparison.”

For their part, Israeli and Palestinian leaders are both seen as agreeing to resume direct talks because neither wants to be assigned blame for scuttling Kerry’s determined diplomatic efforts. Netanyahu also may have renewed the talks as part of a wider deal with the US regarding the Iranian nuclear threat, analysts added.

“These talks are all about who gets blamed for the failure of the peace process”, surmised Diker. “The Palestinians are coming back to the talks because it is very difficult to turn down the United States, and especially the hundreds of millions of dollars in financial assistance the US is providing. They rely completely on Western aid to meet their budgets.”

Nonetheless, Kerry has set an ambitious goal of concluding a final status accord within nine months. Yet quick polls of both the Israeli and Palestinian publics showed neither people has high expectations the talks will produce a deal anytime soon. Nearly 80% of Israelis surveyed said they doubted a peace deal is within reach for now, while the Palestinians polled showed a similar degree of skepticism.

In an indication of the difficulties ahead, Abbas recently told Arab journalists that he would not agree to one single Israeli Jew living in a Palestinian state. Most Israelis saw his hardline stance as a sign the Palestinians are still not ready for compromise.

IRAN SEEKING SECOND ROUTE TO NUKEs
BY DAVID PARSONS

FOR TWO DECADES, Western governments have been focused on Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons via its vast uranium enrichment program, centered around the Natanz and Fordow enrichment plants. But Tehran is now believed to be pursuing a second route to nuclear arms through the nearly-completed heavy water nuclear reactor at Arak, which could be turning out weapons-grade plutonium by next summer.

According to a recent report in The Wall Street Journal, American and European officials are increasingly concerned the Arak facility, due to become operational by July 2014, will be capable of producing two nuclear bombs’ worth of plutonium a year. India, Pakistan and North Korea have all built nuclear bombs using plutonium derived from similar heavy water plants.

The warning comes amid reports that international sanctions on Iran are beginning to take a much heavier toll on its economy. Iran’s hard currency reserves have plummeted as Western sanctions have cut off Iran’s access to world oil markets. Iranian officials also recently reported an inflation rate of 45% and acknowledged the economy is set to contract for the first time in three decades.

Iran’s newly-elected President Hassan Rouhani has offered to resume talks with Western governments, hoping to trade some minor concessions for a lifting of most of the sanctions. But he also declared that Israel is “a wound on the body of the Islamic world”, echoing the words of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khameini that the Jewish state is a “cancer” that must be removed.

Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu responded that Rouhani had shown his true face sooner than many expected. “A nation that threatens to destroy the State of Israel must not be allowed to have weapons of mass destruction,” Netanyahu stated.

Netanyahu also told CBS News that Iran was “within a few weeks” of crossing his red line of having enough enriched uranium to produce a bomb, leaving the West not much time to decide on how to stop Tehran. Although there is no sense of impending war in Israel at present, the nation has stepped up the distribution of gas masks and civil preparedness drills.
JERUSALEM IS A REMARKABLE CITY which blends a glorious past with an infinitely promising future. It is undergoing major changes at present under the leadership of Mayor Nir Barkat, who has brought a ‘can do’ attitude to his job. Besides investing in new and improved infrastructure, he has launched a number of cultural and sporting events as part of his ambitious plans to draw ten million visitors to the city each year.

An active jogger, Barkat inaugurated an annual Jerusalem Marathon that is already attracting tens of thousands of runners and spectators after just three years on the calendar. He also inaugurated an annual Jerusalem Light Show which has dazzled crowds in recent years with its colorful and...
artistic illuminations set against the ancient background of the Old City walls.

Succeeding where previous mayors failed, Barkat also convinced investors to build a large new basketball arena beside Teddy Stadium which will seat nearly 12,000 people. The state-of-the-art facility will not only help lift the Hapoel Jerusalem basketball team into the top tiers of European competition, but it also will be able to host a range of cultural events on a scale not possible before in the Israeli capital.

In another example of the transformation underway in Jerusalem, the city’s dilapidated train station has awoken from decades of dormancy and neglect and now houses an exciting array of shops, restaurants and market stalls that are attracting even more people to Jerusalem. In coming months, the renovated train station will also be home to a hot air balloon operation that will offer the public breath-taking rides over the city.

Another recent brainchild of Mayor Barkat was to bring Formula One and Superbike racers to the capital city – an idea that stemmed from his own tryst with the famed Paris-Dakar Rally some twelve years ago.

Dubbed the Jerusalem Formula, The Peace Road Show, the two-day motorsport extravaganza in mid-June drew the sort of enthusiastic crowds to the streets of Jerusalem that Barkat first envisioned while driving through African villages and seeing thousands of spectators along the roads.

“Today, that personal dream is coming alive, for me and tens of thousands of motorsport fans in Israel,” Barkat said at a press conference just hours ahead of the show.

“The walls of this ancient city heard the noise of hundreds of thousands of horses trying to conquer the holy city, but I think that these walls are going to be in a state of shock when they are going to hear the noise of a more than 700 hundred horsepower Formula 1 car engine,” he forecast.

Mayor Barkat stressed the importance of sports in promoting peace and reconciliation.

“...[S]ports bring people together, the love of cars and the love of people. That is why the Jerusalem Formula Peace road show, I believe, will make Jerusalem a better place,” noted Barkat. “You will see around the track, Muslims, Christian and Jews from all the neighborhoods of Jerusalem come to watch the sport they love. No politics!”

The mayor’s predictions about Jews and Arabs alike enjoying the show proved quite accurate, as the two kilometer circular course was lined with tens of thousands of spectators from all sectors of Israeli society.

“This event is good for the peace between Israelis and Palestinians. You can see both Arabs and Israelis on the streets watching the show, and it’s good that they are watching it together,” 21-year old Ishmael told ICEJ News.

“I think it’s very nice,” concurred 18-year old Noam. “This is something that has never happened in Jerusalem or in Israel before. It will unite people, secular, religious and Arabs... I am proud of our mayor; he has done so much for the city and this is very good for young people.”

Barkat is optimistic for the future of his city.

“Jerusalem is very dynamic, thrilling... It’s a fusion of history and modernity,” the Mayor concluded. “With the Light Festival, the Euro 21 final, the Maccabees games, the Jerusalem Marathon and with many other initiatives in Jerusalem, we are breaking through [the isolation] and returning to the role Jerusalem played 2,000 to 3,000 years ago as a destination for pilgrims and tourists around the world.”

This event is good for the peace between Israelis and Palestinians. You can see both Arabs and Israelis on the streets watching the show, and it’s good that they are watching it together

~ 21 YEAR OLD, ISHMAEL
AFTER FACING DECADES of arduous diplomatic and security challenges, most Israelis long to live in a “normal” country. And this summer, the people of Israel finally got to enjoy a packed calendar of cultural events that other nations routinely enjoy. So despite the relentless campaign to delegitimize and boycott the Jewish state, it has been a grand summer to be in Israel. Here are a few reasons why.

UEFA Under-21 Tourney
As June arrived, city streets all across Israel were plastered with posters promoting the UEFA Under-21 Championship soccer tournament, held this year for the first time in Israel. Football is ‘king’ among Israeli sports fans and public excitement mounted in anticipation of the nation hosting its most important international sporting event in decades - perhaps since the Paralympic games in 1968. Besides being big soccer fans, Israelis also were buoyed by a sense of besting the relentless global campaign to isolate the Jewish state.

As the host nation, Israel was automatically allowed to field one of the eight teams participating in the European football youth competition. The other qualifying teams were England, Germany, Holland, Italy, Norway, Russia and Spain.

The months leading up to the event were marred by calls for boycotts from various groups, with South Africa’s Desmond Tutu being one of the voices leading the charge. Yet many football enthusiasts contended the sport is a great tool for promoting peace and reconciliation, and the UEFA board agreed.

Thus the games kicked off on the fifth of June under a hot Israeli sun. The opening game was held between Israel and Norway and drew close to 11,000 spectators.

Israel fielded one of the most diverse teams in the tournament, consisting of a range of Jewish and Arab players who mirrored Israel’s multi-cultural society as a whole. This included Arabs from the Druze sector and Jews from Ethiopian, European and North African backgrounds.

As the tournament progressed, ICEJ News caught up with players from the Norwegian team taking a rest day along the white sandy beaches of Herzliya Pituach, an upscale resort town north of Tel Aviv. The players seemed to be genuinely enjoying Israel, and all agreed that the hosts had received them extremely well.

“I am in Israel for the first time and I am very surprised. This is a very beautiful country
and I am really enjoying it”, said Joshua King, a promising Norwegian footballer who currently plays for the Blackburn Rovers in England.

“I would easily come back to Israel for a tour”, he added. “We are here to play football and at the moment we are focusing on the games 100 percent, but it would be nice if we could get some spare time for visiting Jerusalem.”

In the end, Spain defended its crown against Italy in the final of the UEFA Under21 Championship 2013, while Israel finished in a respectable fifth place.

Concert season
An unusually long list of musical performers came to Israel for the summer concert season this year, headlined by popular R&B singer Alicia Keys, the legendary Cliff Richard and the incomparable Barbra Streisand. The famous American Jewish singer and actress paid a special visit in June to honor Israeli President Shimon Peres as he turns 90 and to perform her first-ever concerts in Israel.

The president’s 90th birthday celebration in Jerusalem was also attended by Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Sharon Stone and Robert de Niro. The gala marked the opening of the President’s Conference, an annual gathering of global figures in Jerusalem to discuss issues facing the world. Despite the boycott of physicist Stephen Hawking, about 5,000 politicians, diplomats, academics and cultural figures came to Israel to attend the “Facing Tomorrow” conference.

Streisand, a lifelong supporter of Israel, described the country as “a shining beacon of hope in the world.” She has sold around 145 million records over her 50-year career, and won two Academy Awards, eight Grammys and five Emmys. Over 30,000 fans attended her two concerts in a Tel Aviv stadium.

Fellow Grammy award winner Alicia Keys performed in Tel Aviv despite mounting pressure to cancel her concert in Israel. Instead, she expressed a desire to use her music as a way to unify audiences rather than separate them.

Iconic British rocker Sir Cliff Richard, now 72, returned for his first concert in Israel in 25 years and promised to come again much sooner next time. He started his tour with a visit to a tennis center in Nazareth he helps support which brings Jewish and Arab youth together through sports.

The 19th Maccabiah Games
This summer’s Maccabiah Games – also known as the Jewish Olympics – drew some 35,000 Jews to Israel for the two-week sporting competition in July. This included a record contingent of some 7,000 athletes and 2,000 coaches and trainers from 75 countries worldwide.

The Maccabiah Games are considered the world’s third largest sporting event, behind the Olympic Games and Universiade. This year, the Olympic-style games featured competitions in 35 men’s and 34 women’s events, as well as 8 mixed events. The majority of medals at the 19th Maccabiah Games were swept by the Israeli and American teams.

In the biggest surprise of the games, the host Israeli side topped Australia in the rugby final. Meanwhile, team Canada won the first-ever ice hockey tourney held as part of the Maccabiah Games.

The stadiums were packed with local Israelis and visiting Jews at both the opening and closing ceremonies, which featured much colour and fanfare like the regular Olympics. Best of all, the Games ended with several Jewish athletes from abroad deciding to stay in Israel to live rather than returning to their home country.
David Parsons, Media and Public Relations Manager
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem - Jerusalem, Israel

“Establish Thy word unto Thy servant” – Psalm 119:38

He is comfortable with words, competent with their power and weight. He is skilled in deciphering the complexities of the Middle East, cutting to the heart of a matter to communicate a biblically-informed assessment in a straight-forward manner. His credentials are more fitting for five people instead of one: he’s a lawyer, a former lobbyist for Israel, an ordained minister, a print journalist, and a broadcast producer and host.

Yet with all this, when you talk with David, you notice a Southern ease about him. He is relaxed and calm, with a countenance that belies the intensity of his schedule, his remarkable credentials and the weight of his responsibility. What strikes you about him is his commitment to the call of God on his life and how he structured his life to fulfill it. His understanding of Scripture as it pertains to Israel and Middle East—past, present and future—is erudite to say the least. But amidst the intensity of the region he calls home, David is level. He uses clear words. His perspective is measured, based on God’s word and long experience. His goals are to inform, build bridges and diffuse ideological minefields.

Married to Josepha, a Hollander whom he met in Jerusalem, he is supported in his calling with her values, deep love for the Jewish people and her prayers. Their son, Yoni, now 13, was born in Jerusalem and like his father, this child knows how to use words. Unlike dad, however, Yoni’s words are in three languages—English, Dutch and Hebrew—with Arabic on the way.

The next time you encounter any of these media, remember David in your prayers, asking God to establish His Word in this servant that he may represent well and defend Israel, Christianity and the work of the ICEJ.

David credits his team in carrying out all that is associated with the above responsibilities. This is no doubt true. But I think the Lord credits him and his family, for the sacrifices they are making and the load that they bear.

Dr. Carrie Burns is the Educational Programs Developer for the US Branch of ICEJ. This is the first of a series of articles highlighting American staff members of the ICEJ.
Join the global movement
www.icejusa.org/Isaiah62_pledge

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