On the Winning Side

The call of Mordecai still echoes today

very Purim in late winter, the Jewish people remember one of the greatest miracles in their history. It is the story of Esther, the Queen in ancient Persia whose courage and entreaties delivered the Jews from certain destruction.

Esther came from a Jewish family carried into exile in the Babylonian conquest. Young and beautiful, she was chosen to be the bride of the most powerful man in the world at that time – King Ahasuerus of Persia.

But during her time as Queen, things took a turn for the worse. The evil Haman, then prime minister of the realm, was plotting when and how to annihilate all the Jews in the vast Persian Empire. Esther was safely hidden in the royal palace, her Jewish identity yet unknown, but her uncle Mordecai came and pleaded with her to intervene with the king and save her people. His urgent appeal is recorded in the book of Esther:

“And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: ‘Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king’s palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’” (Esther 4:13-14)

Esther heeded his warning, saying “if I perish, I perish!” (Esther 4:16). She made good use of her audience with the king, the Jews were allowed to defend themselves, and their enemy Haman was hung on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Esther and Mordecai led the Jewish people into a time of great influence and blessing within the provinces of Persia.

This extraordinary appeal of Mordecai still rings powerfully today in light of the new Hamans that are arising, even once again in Persia. It teaches us two very important lessons:

God Wins!

First of all, Mordecai boldly declared, “if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place.” What powerful declaration of faith! It teaches us that Israel and the people of God will never be annihilated but will surely survive. Many evil figures have risen up in the course of the history with designs to wipe out Israel. Yet God assures us that they will not succeed.

“Many evil figures have risen up in the course of the history with designs to wipe out Israel. Yet God assures us that they will not succeed.”

Dr. Juergen Buehler

>> continued on back page
Missions Trip to Poland & Israel  
May 26th - June 7th, 2012  
12-days of learning, touring and practical ministry, including a unique ‘hands-on’ service tour of Israel hosted by ICEJ AID.  
Cost $3,618 (includes all flights, hotels)  
www.icejusa.org/tours

Upcoming Events

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was founded in 1980 as an act of comfort and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people in their claim to Jerusalem.

Today, the Christian Embassy stands at the forefront of a growing mainstream movement of Christians worldwide who share a love and concern for Israel and an understanding of the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of Jews to the land of their forefathers.

From our headquarters in Jerusalem and through our branches and representatives in over 80 nations, we seek 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 to all the people of the Land of Israel.

The ICEJ’s United States Branch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with offices in Washington, D.C. and in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. We are a non-denominational faith ministry supported by the voluntary contributions of our members and friends.

We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by using the enclosed response card to make your donation to the ongoing work and witness of the ICEJ.

Please mail all donations to:  
PO Box 440276  
Nashville, TN 37244

Or make your tax-deductible gift online:  
www.icejusa.org

Franklin, TN  
Michael Hines  
Sun. March 25th: 10am & 6pm  
Full Life Assembly of God  
813 Oak Meadow Drive  
Morning Service & 6pm Seder Meal  
Seder Tickets: $10 - RSVP (615) 895-9830

Hendersonville, TN  
Michael Hines  
Wednesday April 11th: 6:30pm  
The Church at Indian Lake  
1428 Callender Ln.

Franklin, TN  
Days of Remembrance Symposium  
Sunday April 15th: 4pm-7:30pm  
Rolling Hills Community Church  
The WareHouse, 1810 Columbia Ave.  
Malcolm Hedding, Annette Lantos,  
Michael Hines, Laurie Cardoza-Moore,  
Sam Clarke, et al.

Washington, DC  
Susan Michael  
Friday April 20th: 9am  
‘His Presence, His Fire Conference’  
Madison Hotel, 1177 15th St. NW.  
Conference Registration Required  
Contact (615) 895-9830 for details

South Jersey  
Teresa Simila  
Wed. April 18th: 7pm  
Praise Tabernacle,  
Egg Harbor Township, NJ  
Thurs. April 19th: 7pm  
Christ Fellowship, Seaville, NJ  
Fri. April 20th: 9am-12pm  
Atlantic Christian School, EHT, NJ  
Sunday April 22nd: 7pm  
River of Life, Blackwood, NJ

Alden, NY  
Discerning the Times  
April 28th: 9am - 12.30pm  
Grace In Community Church  
11269 Broadway Street  
Susan Michael

Murfreesboro, TN  
Israel, the Church & the Nations  
May 18th-20th  
World Outreach Church  
1921 New Salem Road

For more information or to invite an ICEJ speaker or seminar to your church call: (615) 895-9830

Learn more at: www.icejusa.org/events
Juha Ketola Named International Director

Season of transition brings new leadership for Grafted Program

As part of the continuing transition to new leadership within the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, we are pleased to announce that the current Chairman of our Board of Trustees, Rev. Juha Ketola, has been appointed to serve as the ministry’s new International Director. He takes over this key position from Dr. Juergen Buehler, who is now serving as the Executive Director of the worldwide organization.

Rev. Ketola has been a pastor and travelling evangelist in his native Finland as well as in Canada for many years, and took over as National Director of the ICEJ’s Finnish branch in 2005 from its founder Dr. Ulla Jarvilehto. He was elected Chairman of the international board last year and will now move on to the daily task of overseeing the ICEJ’s global network of more than 70 national branches.

“Juha has hands-on experience as a pastor and now as a branch director, as well as serving on our international board,” said Dr. Buehler. “These qualifications will serve him well as he joins our permanent staff in Jerusalem and begins overseeing our national branches worldwide.”

“We clearly see God’s guidance in this decision and we know that Juha is the right person for this position,” Buehler added.

New Leadership for Grafted Program

In addition, the Grafted Young Adults department of the ICEJ will be welcoming a new director, as Jani Salokangas, also from Finland, will come take over from Liesl Maas in coming months. Jani is a talented and dedicated youth minister who has been increasingly involved in Grafted tours and activities in recent years. Jani will fill a strategic position which will serve as a link between Israel and young Christians worldwide.

Liesl Maas helped launch this special outreach to the young generation back in 2003 and built Grafted into a vanguard expression of Christian Zionism among young adults. Both Liesl and her husband Bram Maas will remain involved in the ministry from their new home in the Netherlands.

Profile: Juha Ketola
ICEJ International Director

Rev. Juha Ketola has been in full-time ministry since 1985, serving as a pastor and an evangelist in his native Finland as well as in Canada. He is a graduate of the International Bible Institute of London Kensington Temple in England and an ordained minister with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and Finland. Since the summer of 2000, he has been ministering as an itinerant preacher, holding church meetings and gospel outreaches in various countries while also sharing about God’s plans concerning the modern-day restoration of Israel. He has been speaking at events for the ICEJ since 1996. Currently, he serves as Chairman of the ICEJ International Board of Trustees and as the National Director of ICEJ-Finland. Juha Ketola and his wife, Kati, have three children and two grandchildren. They will take up residence in Jerusalem in coming months.
ICEJ sponsors Ethiopian soccer league

Helping rising Soccer stars, at-risk teens and hungry families in Rishon Lezion

By Esteria Wieja

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem recently began sponsoring a group of 12 football teams in a special soccer league established for Ethiopian Jewish youths in Israel. The ICEJ has purchased custom made jerseys in the various team colors as well as shoes for all the Ethiopian soccer players in the league. The bright jerseys carry the logo of the ICEJ as team sponsors.

ICEJ representative Doron Schneider distributed the uniforms and shoes at a recent gathering of the teams in Rehovot, and told them that they were gifts from Christian friends from around the world.

Most of the team members were small children when they made the long difficult journey to Israel as part of the “Operation Moses” emergency airlift in 1984. At the recent ceremony in Rehovot, the teams observed a minute of silence in remembrance of the 4,000 Ethiopian Jews who lost their lives while trying to make it to Israel thru Sudan. Then they opened the season with an all-day soccer tournament in their new team jerseys.

“I was eight years old when I started my journey from Ethiopia to Israel via Sudan,” recalled Erez Dezlin. “My little brother was two years old and my mother was also six months pregnant. We walked about 600 miles on foot. We did not have much food with us to eat. Many families lost loved ones on the way, some died from hunger, thirst, diseases and some even were killed by robbers on the way... I am so glad that I finally made it and my dream to live in Israel became real.”

Today Erez is the supervising coach for the twelve youth soccer teams from the Ethiopian community in Rehovot and he has a new dream. He wants to help the Ethiopian Jews to integrate better into Israeli society and to give them hope and life skills through sports.

Helping Israeli youth reach higher

Israeli teenager Idan almost dropped out of school at 16. His mother supported the whole family of seven, and Idan felt pressure to go find a job. But that is when he learned of “Touching the Horizon” - an educational program for youth-at-risk - and his whole life changed.

Touching the Horizon is a learning and enrichment program established by the Israeli non-profit Pitchon Lev (Caring Heart) in 2002, in cooperation with Tel Aviv University. It is devoted to helping at-risk teens get through the difficult transition years between 10th grade and the first year of army service. Students receive special tutoring and hot meals, participate in self-empowerment sessions, enjoy cultural activities, and prepare for the IDF.

For the past three years, the Christian Embassy’s AID team has helped sponsor
Touching the Horizon, which currently serves 75 at-risk teens nationwide that have shown high scholastic potential. This way, promising youths from impoverished families can finish high school and achieve successes that were otherwise out of reach.

Their initial year of Army service presents many challenges, whether physical, social, emotional or intellectual. Touching the Horizon teaches these troubled teens how to cope with the stresses of being away from home, and having to learn discipline and submit to authority.

Touching the Horizon has many success stories and the ICEJ is a proud partner in this program, which is bringing hope for a better future to deserving Israeli youths.

Serving Families First-Hand

Several times each year, the ICEJ AID department arranges for the entire staff of the Christian Embassy in Jerusalem to take part in hands-on charitable projects in different parts of Israel. Last month, the ICEJ staff joined with our friends at Pitchon Lev in a unique food drive in Rishon Lezion in the greater Tel Aviv area.

The ICEJ staff arrived on a Thursday morning to set up tables in a mall parking lot for the weekly food bank, and then packaged fruits, loaves of bread and other groceries to personally hand over to needy families.

All the Embassy volunteers rolled up their sleeves and went to work carrying heavy bags of frozen and canned goods. Those ICEJ staff members who speak Hebrew also helped with the registration desk, giving out voucher numbers to those waiting in a long line for food packages.

“We should do this more often,” said Sara Comparado, an ICEJ staff member from Portugal. “Sometimes, all it takes to make a difference in someone’s week is to help them carry a sack of groceries.”

An older woman blew a kiss towards one of the ICEJ volunteers, saying with a smile, “You’re so sweet! Thank you so much!”

Altogether, more than 500 Israeli families living below the poverty line receive several bags of basic food items each week at the Thursday market outside a large shopping mall. For them, there is a sense that they are simply going shopping like their neighbors.

Please consider making a donation to ICEJ AID for our food distribution programs. Go to: www.icejusa.org/aid.

Estera Wieja serves as a staff writer for the ICEJ Media Team in Jerusalem

Knesset Honors
Dr. Juergen Buehler

“At a recent ceremony in Jerusalem, members of the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus joined the World Jewish Congress and the Ministry of Tourism in presenting an award to Dr. Juergen Buehler, the executive director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, for his commitment to Israel.

The Caucus, which has 17 Knesset members, recognized Dr. Buehler at its annual “Night to Honor Our Christian Allies” banquet in January. The special award, given together with the Ministry for Tourism, was presented to Dr. Buehler for his contributions to Israeli tourism, including his efforts to expand the ICEJ’s Feast of Tabernacles gathering, the largest and most popular annual tourist event in Israel.

Buehler served for five years as International Director for the Christian Embassy and recently was appointed its Executive Director.

In his acceptance speech, he highlighted the historic expansion of interfaith cooperation between Israeli officials and the Christian community over recent decades, citing the ICEJ’s unique partnerships with Yad Vashem and The Jerusalem Post as examples of significant progress in Christian-Jewish relations.”
Israel’s Warning Lights

In the edgy atmosphere hanging over Israel in 2012, rumors of imminent war with Iran are flying by at supersonic speeds

By David Parsons

In January, the US announced plans to deploy an unprecedented 9,000 troops in Israel for an annual joint military exercise. Many instantly read it as a sign both countries were bracing for a looming Israeli attack on Iran’s renegade nuclear program.

But when the massive air raid drill was postponed, this too was seen as a signal of impending war – since Washington feared so many American boots on the ground in Israel would be taken as a US ‘green light’ for the approaching Israeli strikes.

The latest warp-speed rumor concerns recent comments by US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta that he fully expects Israel to launch pre-emptive strikes on Iran sometime this year, even as early as April. That was quickly translated as an attempt to deter Israel from taking a course of action already decided upon.

The question of how to deal with Iran’s determined drive for nuclear weapons has been hovering over the West for over a decade now and soon the guesswork will be over. During 2012, the world indeed will know whether the Iranians finally fold under crippling sanctions, or pass beyond the point of no return in their alarming quest for atomic weapons.

Until now, Israel has cooperated with its global allies on a five-front strategy for stopping Iran’s nuclear program. This has involved political pressure, covert measures, counter-proliferation, sanctions and efforts at regime change. The Ayatollahs are still entrenched as ever, but bans on the purchase of Iranian crude oil are beginning to sink the economy, while mysterious computer viruses and hits on nuclear scientists have also taken a toll.

So far, these efforts have managed to slow Tehran down some and extend the time frame for more drastic actions. Yet Iran has continued to make steady progress in spite of every obstacle thrown in its path.

In a recent interview in The New York Times, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak claimed that the Netanyahu government has yet to order a military operation against Iran but he has concluded that such a decision will have to be made in 2012 to prevent Tehran from entering its “immunity zone.” By that he meant the stage at which Iran’s nuclear know-how, enriched uranium stockpiles, missile production lines, and other key facilities can be taken underground and made impervious to military strikes. In essence, Barak just turned on Israel’s warning flashers.
Tellingly, the Iranians also just announced that its uranium enrichment facility buried some 220 feet inside a mountain at Fordo will soon be operational. Israeli leaders estimate that there are only six to nine months left to pull the trigger.

Until now, US intelligence estimates on when Iran will cross the nuclear threshold have been two to three years beyond the Israeli assessments. But that gap appears to be closing, with Panetta now factoring in 15 months at most for other options to work.

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has drawn the analogy between the Iranian threat and the rising Nazi menace over Europe in the late 1930s. In a recent briefing in Jerusalem, former CIA director James Woolsey agreed.

"The world is moving towards a situation which is extraordinarily tense," Woolsey assessed. "Iran is committed to two overarching objectives. I am afraid it's rather parallel to what Hitler was writing and saying in the late 1920s and 30s. Number one, kill the Jews! And second, dominate the region!"

Woolsey cautioned that while it may still take Iran a couple more years to fit a sophisticated plutonium warhead on a Shihab missile, it could easily cobble together a crude atomic device within months and float it into Haifa or New York harbor inside a fishing trawler.

Woolsey also contended that the US should “take responsibility” for dealing with the Iranian nuclear threat because it is a "world problem." But he expressed serious doubts that the current American administration would take the lead, especially in an election year. "I don’t predict at all that this course of events will be something that President Obama will choose," he said dryly.

So if Israel has to go it alone, to prevent what Netanyahu has described as the spectre of another Holocaust, can and will the Israeli military be capable of pulling it off?

To answer that seminal question, it is first worth noting that the Israeli air force has already practiced for such a complex, long-range mission, sending squadrons of jets and refuelling planes all the way to Gibraltar – the same distance as Tehran is to the east.

Second, it also should be noted that Israel has carried out such pre-emptive missions before, in the case of both the Iraqi and Syrian atomic reactors. But this assignment would be much more complicated due to the greater distances involved, the difficulty of surprise, and the measures Iran has taken to protect its nuclear facilities.

Third, these earlier operations demonstrate that for Israel, pre-emption is not an option but an established policy. Israel simply will not allow a regional enemy bent on its demise to possess weapons of mass destruction.

Fourth, Netanyahu has become much more vocal on the Iranian threat than his predecessor Ehud Olmert, but he had the ear of a sympathetic US president. That is not necessarily the case with Obama.

Finally, some analysts say Israel has the military capability to set back Iran’s nuclear program by three-to-five years. They would use long-range fighter-bombers, refuelling and air command planes, and advanced super-drones that can loiter over targets for 48 hours, plus submarines and Jericho missiles.

However, Israel simply would not be able to deal on its own with all the expected fallout from any such pre-emptive strikes. Tehran has threatened to unleash a wave of retaliatory attacks that would include targeting American forces in the region, closing the vital oil shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf, and activating dozens of sleeper terror cells worldwide. World oil markets would shudder, and we all know who would be blamed for the chaos.

Israel itself presently faces 200,000 missiles and rockets of various ranges and payloads in the arsenals of Iran, Syria, Hizbullah and Hamas all aimed at its civilian heartland, and would be too tied up defending the homeland to put out fires elsewhere.

Thus, Jerusalem undoubtedly prefers to be part of a broader coalition to stop Iran. Only time will tell if it can force America’s hand in that regard.

Until then, brace for even more warp speed rumors of war.

David Parsons serves as ICEJ Media Director and Contributing Christian Editor of The Jerusalem Post Christian Edition.
The prophet Isaiah makes this very encouraging statement: “Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals, and brings out a weapon for its work; and I have created the destroyer to ruin. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper.” (Isaiah 54:16-17)

All the nuclear scientists and military experts which scheme to wipe out Israel were also created by God, and they cannot surprise or outsmart Him! The God of Israel, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, watches over His people. Indeed, Psalm 121:4-5 assures that “He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper.”

**The Question of Survival**

Mordecai’s appeal also contains a very sobering message. Deliverance will always come to the Jews from some quarter. But silence in the face of peril to the Jews could mean “you and your father’s house will perish”. Therefore, to stand up for God’s people has less to do with Israel’s survival and more to do with our own survival. If we remain silent, we are endangering ourselves.

Paul echoes this warning in his epistle to the church in Rome: “Do not boast against the branches [the Jews]. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.” (Romans 11:18)

If Christians fail to recognize the eternal and irrevocable calling of Israel, we are endangering and undermining our very own root system. Nobody can survive without nourishing roots.

**For Such a Time as This**

Finally, Mordecai reminded his niece that there is a purpose in her high calling as a great Queen. “Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Her uncle challenges her to consider her royal position not as a luxurious privilege but as a calling from God.

Too many times we as Christians like to enjoy our privileges and cherished moments as children of God, and we do not recognize that the world around us is lost and in desperate need of rescue. God never called us to be passengers on a luxury ocean liner called the Church, but rather as crew members on a rescue vessel operating in stormy seas. Let us never forget our high calling of God to Israel and the nations.

One of the most regrettable aspects of the Holocaust was the prevailing silence of the churches. Too few spoke out too late. Early in Hitler’s rise, some pastors and theologians saw prophetic significance in so many Jews fleeing Europe to Palestine. They sensed it was the first sign of the restoration of Zion and of the Lord’s return. Yet they failed to speak out and assist God’s chosen people in their hour of need.

Today as well, many Christians realize the promised restoration of Israel is happening, along with the nations being gathering against her for judgment. Yet they fail to take any real action to stand with the purposes of God. Too many Christians sit back in silence as Israel faces new threats once again from Persia, which is today’s Iran.

So let us remember that God will surely deliver Israel – even if we are silent. The question is: Will we take a stand for the sake of God’s purposes, and for our own sake? Let us resolve to work together to ensure that the Church will never be silent and passive again. ☺

---

**Esther & the King**

The holiday of Purim reminds us to stand with the Jewish people. One very practical way to do this is to support our groundbreaking Pastors Conferences at Yad Vashem. Learn more on pages 4-5.