GOD MOVING IN WEST AFRICA

ICEJ AID
GROWTH & EXPANSION AT THE HAIFA HOME

TIME FOR HARVEST
BY DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER
Dear friends,

We have just returned from another inspiring ministry trip to Africa. When I landed in the capital of the Ivory Coast, I was amazed at the level of development apparent in the country. As a matter of fact, the Ivory Coast is the second most-developed country in Africa, after only South Africa. Many neighbouring countries have even greater resources than the Ivory Coast but they are less modern and advanced.

So I asked our local host what is the secret of the success in his country. He replied that he had wondered about this himself but had no sure answer.

The next day we paid a visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and upon arrival the deputy foreign minister told us: “You need to know one thing about our country. When our nation gained independence in 1960, the first president of our country, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, immediately established a covenant between Israel and our new country.”

Hearing him use this unusual word “covenant” to describe their close bilateral relations, I immediately thought about the ancient promise which God gave to Abraham: “I will bless those who bless you.” (Genesis 12:3) I am sure that this covenant relationship has attracted the blessing of God upon the entire nation. This is an eternal principle which rings true to this today.

Besides the exciting developments which arose out of our recent ministry trip to Africa, this issue of the *Word From Jerusalem* focuses again on our important work among needy Holocaust survivors in Israel. Our assisted-living home in Haifa has become a center of blessing for all the survivors who live there. Besides the residents of the home, we reach out from there to hundreds of survivors throughout the area to feed them, provide medical and dental care, and supply their basic needs.

This is an important work which does not have the luxury of time. Every single day, more Holocaust survivors are passing away and the time we have to show them the love of Jesus in practical ways is literally shrinking day-by-day. Please join us so that together we can touch these precious lives while there is still time.

Yours in Christ!

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ Executive Director
The lessons of the Holocaust include the failure of Christian values at the time when they were most needed. We, as Christians, need not only formal education but an emotional and spiritual connection that can only be created through a shared understanding of history. We welcome Christians world-wide to join in our activities in Holocaust commemoration and education.

Bible Teaching on Pentecost
Linked to the first barley and wheat harvest in Israel, Shavuot or Pentecost is also the feast where God poured out His Spirit and there was a wonderful harvest of souls with 3,000 saved. Are you ready? The fields are white...

To learn more about upcoming ICEJ events go to: www.iceusa.org/events
Growth & Expansion at the Haifa Home

Over the past three years, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has established a unique assisted-living facility in Haifa that has become a special place of warmth and loving care for the dozens of Holocaust survivors who now reside there.

BY ESTERA WIEJA

Today the ‘warm home’ in Haifa has more than 80 residents and each one has a dramatic story to tell of somehow enduring the Nazi genocide campaign while in their youths.

The Home started out several years ago in a small building on Kassel Street in Haifa, where Shimon Sabag began housing 14 survivors he had encountered at a soup kitchen he was operating. It was shocking for him to see elderly people with tattooed numbers from Auschwitz and Treblinka standing in line for food hand-outs. Thus began his journey to help as many of these deserving people as possible.

In December 2009, Shimon approached the Christian Embassy with a request to help purchase the ground floor of a building next door in order to open a community kitchen for several hundred poor Holocaust survivors in the Haifa area. The ICEJ responded quickly with the needed funds and also proposed that the whole building be purchased in order to house more survivors.

The four-story building was purchased and renovated, and the following year a second building on the same street was purchased and renovated. Besides the new apartments and community dining hall, the project was expanded to include a synagogue, a medical and dental clinic, and an intensive-care wing. In recent months, the facility has been expanded into more apartments in neighbouring buildings and renovations are underway to increase the number of residents.

The city of Haifa was so moved by the initiative that the street was renamed the “Christian Embassy Center”.

Today, the Haifa Home is nearing 100 residents and more are moving in as renovations are completed. Some of the newest residents were actually homeless when they were welcomed into the unique residential community. The waiting list of needy Holocaust survivors applying for residency in the warm home is over 2,000 persons long, most of them survivors of Nazi camps in Poland and Germany. A careful selection process identifies the most worthy tenants based on need.

An estimated 200,000 Holocaust survivors currently live in Israel and up to one-third of these are in dire financial straits, often due to costly medical problems.

Most of these survivors are now well into their 70s and 80s if not older, and many suffer from illnesses that are related to the severe malnourishment they endured as youngsters during the worst deprivations of World War II. Besides serious health problems, many also struggle with loneliness and emotional trauma.

The Christian Embassy is still raising more funds to help operate the assisted-living home and expand it into apartments in surrounding buildings that have become available in the same neighbourhood. An additional $500,000 will be needed to maintain the facility and complete the renovations in this latest phase of expansion, which now entails apartments located in nine different buildings.

There are hundreds of Holocaust survivors currently in urgent need of a secure place to live out their lives in dignity and have their hearts set on joining the community at the Haifa Home. We are working diligently to make this happen but we need your help.
DONATE TODAY

Please support this urgent and worthy humanitarian project.
Give to ICEJ AID today at:
www.icejusa.org/Haifa

LEAH SZLAG, a Holocaust survivor living in the Haifa Home
HAIFA COMMUNITY FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Over the past three years, the Christian Embassy’s assisted-living home for needy Holocaust survivors has expanded into nine different buildings in the Hadar neighbourhood of Haifa. This includes entire buildings used to house survivors (buildings 2 & 5) as well as apartments in other buildings renovated to house additional survivors (buildings 1, 3-4, & 6-9). We are still in the process of securing and refurbishing apartments in several of these buildings and need your urgent and generous contributions in order to have places ready for indigent survivors now desperate for a place to live.

Photo by: Nitsan Shorer/Maof
THE HAIFA HOME for Holocaust Survivors has become a major project of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem over recent years, as we urgently seek to aid and comfort those who endured the Nazi genocide campaign but today are struggling with medical, financial and emotional challenges late in life. We have shared the incredible stories of many of the survivors who live in the Haifa Home. Yet Shimon Sabag, the founder and manager of the home, has his own dramatic story to tell of how he came to care over these precious lives.

In the early 1990s, Shimon was advancing quickly in the business world and held a senior management position in one of Israel’s largest supermarket chains. He was well-liked and trusted by colleagues with both finances and personnel management, and thus fit the ideal of a ‘company man’. Yet already then, he felt in his heart that he was blessed and prospering so that he could bless others. So with the grocery chain’s ample resources at his fingertips, Shimon was very involved in helping the poor.

However, everything changed in 1993. On his way to a meeting, Shimon’s driver fell asleep behind the wheel and the vehicle went flying off the road. Shimon barely survived the accident. His collar bone and four disks in his spine were broken, and his skull was fractured. Doctors told him to be glad he was alive, but not to expect much more than that. The diagnosis was that he would be paralyzed for life.

What the doctors did not take into account is that Shimon called upon the name of the Almighty, believing He is a God of miracles. Shimon prayed that if the Lord would allow him to arise once again, he would serve the needy among his people for the rest of his life.

So he started inquiring why they were not receiving support from the government and began fighting for their rights. But this legal struggle was rather intense for his body, and in 2005 Shimon suffered a stroke. The whole right side of his body became paralyzed again and his blood pressure was skyrocketing.

Not long after the accident, Shimon tried several times to get up from his bed, at first in his own strength. These attempts resulted in further injuries, so the doctors ordered the nurses to keep a close eye on him. But Shimon would not give up!

After reading from the Psalms and being encouraged by the amazing story of David, he prayed for strength for one last attempt to stand up. Yet he knew that if he fell again, he could cause further irreversible damage to his spine.

As he arose from the wheelchair and stood on his own two feet, the first words that came out of his mouth were Yesh Elohim! (“There is a God!”) He walked over to the nurses and repeated the same powerful words: Yesh Elohim! The astounded nurses responded joyfully with the same words, but immediately led him back to his bed.

After this incredible moment, Shimon started the long path to physical recovery. Today, he has been legally recognised with a 100% disability. But he has refused to sit idly by, especially since his spirit was soaring with an undeniable sense that God’s hand was on his life. So he pursued his daily rehabilitation routine with great inner strength and determination.

As soon as he could move around independently, Shimon started seeking out ways to serve others. He opened a soup kitchen with his own money, which soon expanded to include an after-school club where local children could get a meal and do their homework. In 2001, he officially launched Yad Ezer L’Haver, a charitable organisation to help the poor.

“I thank God to this day for saving me, and in a sense, I’m paying my dues to Him”, Shimon recently shared with great enthusiasm. “It’s almost like I’m a ‘prisoner of thanks’, but in a very positive way. Having this debt to God is my greatest joy.”

Shimon has been feeding the hungry and stretching out a helping hand to those in need every day for many years now. But one day something really hit him hard. In one of his soup kitchens, as needy people lined up to take numbers in order to receive some food, several of the elderly folks in line joked with each other that they already had numbers on their forearms, so they really did not need another one.

Shimon could not believe what he saw. Among those in the soup line were Holocaust survivors with numbers tattooed on their arms from Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Teplinka and other Nazi concentration camps.

He realised he needed to slow down and not waste
his energy on fighting the bureaucracy. Instead, as soon as he recovered and could move his right arm again, Shimon decided to establish a small home for elderly Holocaust survivors in the Haifa area. The project began in a modest building in the city's Hadar neighbourhood where he could house 14 survivors. Yet his dream was simply too big for one person to handle.

So in 2009, Shimon approached the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem with a proposal to purchase the ground floor of a building next door in order to open a community kitchen for several hundred poor Holocaust survivors in the Haifa area.

The ICEJ responded quickly with the needed funds and also proposed that the entire four-story building be purchased in order to house more survivors. Thus the expansion of the Haifa Home began.

“Some of my fellow Jews discouraged me from working with Christians”, Shimon recently admitted. “But I believe that we, as Jews and Christians, come from the same root. We share the same values. God brought us together, and today this work has grown so much and affected so many lives.”

BY BIRTE SCHOLZ

MANYA is one of the newest residents at the Haifa Home for Holocaust survivors, sponsored by the Christian Embassy. An artist and poet, she has written three books. In one book, she both tells and illustrates her life story. It is such a dramatic story that a theatrical play is even planned out of it.

Manya was born in 1933 in Bessarabia, a region along the border between Romania and the Ukraine. She was just eight years old when German soldiers occupied the area in August 1941 and began deporting the Jewish population to nearby Transnistria.

“Soldiers came in the middle of the night and deported us. They were yelling at us: ‘Faster! Faster!’” Manya recalled. “I saw the soldiers but I did not know what the war was all about. We had to walk hundreds of kilometers, even the small children and old people.”

Hundreds of thousands of Jews as well as the local Roma gypsies were forced to make the march, and many were killed along the way. Those who could walk no further were shot or simply left to die.

“We had to walk for three months”, Manya remembers. “I was the only daughter of my parents and I was very weak. At one point, I could not go on and I just sat down and said ‘I can’t go any further’. A soldier came and wanted to shoot me. But my mother threw herself at the soldier’s feet and begged him: ‘Please, don’t take my only child from me!’ In a miraculous turn, the soldier did not shoot me and my father took me on his shoulders to carry me.”

“Whenever I fell down my mother and father always helped me. They were very concerned because they saw that I was not eating or drinking anything. When we would come to a village, they would ask for a bit of water for me.”

Manya is 80 years old now but says she remembers it all as if they brought her the water yesterday.

Her mother also was pregnant with another child at the time, and Manya was too young to understand why her mother was getting bigger even though there was little to eat. After two months of marching, winter came and it began snowing when it was time for Manya’s mother to give birth.

“It was like a miracle that a man came by and took us on his horse cart with him. My mother gave birth and the man’s wife took the child from her, telling her that the baby had died. But we heard that it was alive”, Manya recounts. “Maybe the child is still living somewhere. It was good that they took it because at least it had a chance to survive.”

“In Jewish tradition we say that if you save one life, you save a whole world. With that in mind, I believe the Christian Embassy has saved a multitude of worlds already! I don’t want to hide this cooperation. I am proud of it!” Shimon assured.

“Shimon Sabag has proven to be an extremely honest, reliable, generous and compassionate partner in the Haifa Home venture”, responded Dr. Bühler. “Working hand-in-hand with him has truly been an inspiration, as we see his daily commitment to serving the neediest in society.”

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In 1951, the family made aliyah to Israel.

Desperate to find an affordable place to live, Manya has now been living since January in the warmth and safety of the ICEJ’s Home for Holocaust survivors in Haifa. She was already connected with the home and taking part in some of the activities for Holocaust survivors there. But a place recently opened for her to finally take up residence in the home and she is very grateful.

As we expand the Haifa Home with additional apartments, we will be able to assist many more very deserving Holocaust survivors like Manya. Please consider a generous gift today through ICEJ AID.
SHAYA BEN YEHUDA IN PROFILE

For the past seven years, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been privileged to partner with Yad Vashem in order to assist that revered Israeli institution in reaching out to the Christian world. By launching the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem initiative in 2005, we have sought to bolster Yad Vashem in carrying out its primary missions of preserving the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and teaching its universal lessons to future generations.

The gentleman who oversees the Christian Desk at Yad Vashem is uniquely suited to these dual tasks. Mr. Shaya Ben Yehuda, who serves as Managing Director of the International Relations Division at Yad Vashem, has a strong motivation to keep alive the memory of the victims of the Shoah because so many of his own family members perished at the hands of the Nazis. In addition, he has been a proven leader and innovator in Jewish education and has been able to utilise those skills in a key position at Yad Vashem.

“The Holocaust was not just a genocide. It was a decision to annihilate an entire race, and that makes it a uniquely tragic event in human history”, Shaya explained recently. “The Nazis rejected the basic notion which we share as Jews and Christians, that all men are created in the image of God and thus must be treated with equal respect.”

Shaya was born on Kibbutz Yavne, south of Tel Aviv, to parents who both managed to escape from Europe on the eve of the Holocaust.

His father came to the Land of Israel from Vienna immediately after the Anschluss (Nazi coup) in Austria in 1938 and his mother fled from Breslau in Germany early the next year. Both managed to enter Mandate Palestine, she under a Jewish youth visa and he as an illegal immigrant.

On his mother’s side, Shaya’s grandfather considered himself more German than Jewish. He was very assimilated and patriotic, especially since two of his brothers had fought and died for Germany in World War One.

Still, he was one of the 10,000 Jews arrested on Kristallnacht, the massive Nazi pogrom in November 1938, and was held at Buchenwald. But he was then released due to poor health and died not long after.
“My mother knew it was time to flee”, said Shaya. “After Kristallnacht, no one held out hope for the future of the Jewish community in Germany.”

His mother had been very secular, but in 1935 the Nazi authorities forced her to leave the state school and to attend a Jewish school. There she became religious, a change that would lead to her raising Shaya as an observant Jew.

Meanwhile, Shaya’s father came from a prominent Jewish family in Vienna. Once in Palestine, he fought in the British army during World War Two and later in Israel’s War of Independence in 1948 and the Sinai campaign of 1956.

Shaya was too young to serve in the 1967 Six Day War, but did fight in the Sinai in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and in Lebanon during the 1982 ‘Peace for Galilee’ operation.

Early on, Shaya had his heart set on studying at the Technion and becoming an engineer. But seeing his companions fall in the Yom Kippur War changed his mind dramatically.

“I came back with a strong desire to do something to give back to the Jewish people. So I dedicated the next ten years to becoming a Jewish educator,” he confided.

Shaya earned a Master’s degree from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem after pursuing extensive studies in Jewish history, philosophy, the Talmud and education. Soon after, Shaya established the unique “Efrata” elementary school in the Baka neighbourhood of Jerusalem. It was an open, progressive school which brought together Jewish children from a diverse array of religious and cultural backgrounds – which was still quite unusual for Israel in the 1980s.

He served as principal of the Efrata school for nine years and then did a stint as a senior educator with the Jerusalem Fellows program. His next stop was four years abroad teaching Jewish history and religion at the Mount Scopus College in Melbourne, Australia.

"IT TAKES A LIFETIME OF LEARNING, ESPECIALLY TO PREVENT A TRAGEDY LIKE THE HOLOCAUST AGAIN."

When Shaya returned to Israel in 1998, he soon joined the staff of Yad Vashem, taking up his current position in order to help its leadership formulate and implement a new master plan for development and growth for the next millennium. The impressive new museum was part of that master plan, but it also contained a big shift in setting ‘education’ as the new top priority for Yad Vashem – an area in which Shaya excelled.

Since then, the School of Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem has been greatly expanded and this year it will host 65 international seminars on Holocaust education. Thousands of foreign teachers and educators are being trained each year at Yad Vashem, while 80,000 IDF soldiers and 80,000 Israeli students take part in its study programs annually.

In all, over 300,000 people participate in the activities and programs of the School of Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem annually – amounting to about one-third of the total visitors to the museum and campus each year.

“Today, Yad Vashem is one of the most computer savvy institutions in the world”, said Shaya. “We are using digital technologies to make a personal file for each victim of the Holocaust. Plus, we are meeting the growing challenge to preserve survivor testimonies before they all pass away, as well as to satisfy the hunger for knowledge about the Shoah among youth today.”

Another new initiative that Shaya has pioneered is Yad Vashem’s historic decision to reach out to the Christian world by creating Christian Friends of Yad Vashem.

“The world has learned from the Holocaust but not to the degree where we can sit back and say we are satisfied. And this is one of the missions of our partnership with the Christian Embassy. Educating is not a ‘one shot’ deal achieved in one day. Always in education you have to continue. It takes a lifetime of learning, especially to prevent a tragedy like the Holocaust again.”

“We have to be honest about the dark chapters in the history of Christian-Jewish relations”, concluded Shaya. “We cannot ignore the centuries of Christian hostility against the Jews, which helped sow the widespread hatred towards us common among Hitler’s many accomplices.”

“But we also cannot forget that from the start Christians and Jews have shared the same biblical values of mankind being created in God’s image. And we also have to acknowledge that much of Christianity has changed since the Holocaust. With your help, we hope to build on that change and establish a lasting partnership with the Christian world.”

Join us today in supporting the work of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem. To make a donation or to learn more, go to: www.icejusa.org/yadvashem
Three times a year the Bible commands the Jewish people to ascend to Jerusalem to celebrate before God. In spring Israel celebrates Passover and then Pentecost, while the greatest of all feasts – the Feast of Tabernacles – is marked in autumn.

All three pilgrimage feasts are also harvest feasts. Each one celebrates an ingathering of ripened produce from the land. Passover dedicates the ‘first fruits’, whereby Israel acknowledged that everything belongs to God. He deserves the first and best part of the harvest. By offering the prime portion, the entire harvest is thereby sanctified before God.

Pentecost was a feast of thanksgiving for the spring harvest, primarily the wheat and barley crops.

During Sukkot or Tabernacles each autumn, the late harvests of grapes and all the fruit of the trees were dedicated to God. This was the greatest feast as it also symbolised the end of the annual harvest cycle before winter arrived.

AN ANCIENT LAW
The principle of harvest is inherent in Creation itself. When God created plants, animals and mankind, he made them to produce seeds to procreate, each after its own kind (Genesis 1:11ff). The first commandment God gave man was to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28). This means God expects his Creation to constantly bring forth a harvest. It is literally engraved in the DNA of all created life.

Shortly after the flood, God affirmed to Noah this eternal principle. “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22).

The principle of seed and harvest will last as long as our planet lasts. There will always be seasons of ploughing and sowing, followed by seasons of harvest.

Yet, a harvest also will not just happen without seeds being sown. It is a divine law which rules both the physical (Leviticus 23:10) and spiritual realms (Hosea 10:12).

PRINCIPLES OF HARVEST
There are certain universal principles which control the dynamic and outcome of the harvest. To understand them will
allow us to reap a plentiful harvest, and also protect us from a bad harvest.

1) Principle of causality

Most events in the Bible, as well as in our lives and in nature, do not just happen but are the consequence of prior actions. Without the hard labours of ploughing and sowing, a genuine harvest cannot be expected.

When it comes to nations, this often meant that the first missionaries sent out into unreached regions sometimes paid with their very lives. The early Church father Tertullian stated: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

This also applies in our personal lives. The visions which God has placed over your life might require times of tilling the ground, sowing and watering. If you feel called to be a teacher, then study the word of God! If you are called to be an evangelist, then learn the work of an Evangelist!

2) The amount of seed matters

If you are looking for a large harvest then do not sow sparingly. A stingy seed will result in a stingy harvest (2 Corinthians 9:6). Paul writes this in the context of our finances. A sacrificial seed will attract the attention of God (Luke 21:1-3).

At times, to sow requires an act of faith. Isaac decided to sow during a time of a drought and famine. The neighbouring farmers might have laughed at this as a ‘waste’ of seed! But God rewarded him with a hundred-fold harvest in the same season (Genesis 26:1, 12).

So do not let your circumstances dictate to you the type of seed you plant. Rather, put your faith in an Almighty God. This applies to all areas of our lives. If all you read is one Bible verse a day and utter a quick prayer before you leave home, then do not expect to become a spiritual giant.

3) The type of seed matters

It sounds trivial but do not expect a harvest of wheat from thorn seeds. You reap what you sow! If you sow wind you will reap a storm (Hosea 10:13). If you sow righteousness you will reap mercy (Hosea 10:12).

Paul reminds us: “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Galatians 6:7-8)

4) It all depends on God

Finally, we have to recognise that we can sow as much as we want, but if we lack the blessing of God we labour in vain. Paul states: “So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:7)

At the end of the day, we are dependent on Him. It is our relationship to Jesus which is the all-determining factor. Jesus says that it is impossible for us to bear fruit on our own. But “he who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5) Therefore, nurture your relationship with Jesus and your harvest will come in due time.

CONCLUSION

So we see that much in our personal lives hinges on the principles of seed and harvest. Yet God also speaks of the harvesting of souls.

Jesus came out of a Samaritan town greatly impacted by his ministry and told his disciples to expect great things from God: “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (John 4:35)

Jesus saw a great harvest taking place in Israel and encouraged his disciples to “lift up your eyes”. Too many people have lost hope for their nation or for the Middle East. Jesus challenges us to lift our sights. The prophet Isaiah declares that which looked barren and dry in Israel will be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field into a forest. What is going to trigger this? The outpouring of God’s Spirit.

THIS YEAR’S FEAST THEME IS “HARVEST”

The Bible encourages us to expect a great end-time harvest of souls all around the world. The prophet Amos foresaw a day, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.” (Amos 9:13)

This is what is happening in Asia, Africa and Latin America today. It also can happen in your nation. And it can happen in Israel.

I look forward to seeing you at the Feast this September! It is harvest time! Learn more about the attending this year’s Feast Celebration! www.icejusa.org/feast
ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO, we in the leadership of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem received a prophetic word from the Lord that He would open for us ten new branches in Arab/Muslim nations. Soon after this prophecy, doors of ministry began opening for us in several Muslim-majority countries in North Africa, and soon thereafter in West Africa.

In November last year, we inaugurated a new ICEJ branch in Sierra Leone, which is about 60 percent Muslim and 30 percent Christians. Then in February of this year, we dedicated two more new branches in Senegal and Niger.

Senegal and Niger are both countries where more than 90 percent of the population is Muslim. The Christian communities in these nations are small minorities of only five percent in Senegal and under 0.5 percent in Niger. However, the Body of Christ in both of these nations has freedom to preach the Gospel, to plant churches, and to build up their people in the Word of God. The churches there are growing and this was wonderful to behold during a recent speaking tour which I took through the region.

In Senegal, all the local Evangelical leaders came to witness and bless the inauguration of the new ICEJ-Senegal branch. The heads of the Pentecostal, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Methodist and Brethren churches attended the teaching seminars and worship meetings, eager to receive our vision and our message concerning God’s plans for Israel. They truly see the importance of the Church to bless and pray for Israel and they came together in unity to work with our ministry to accomplish this end.

Our regional representative for Western Africa is Rev. Abdou Maiga, who is also our national director in Senegal and a well-known preacher and Bible scholar throughout the region. As we set him apart to carry out the duties of an ICEJ national director, it was clear that he had already done excellent preparatory work by meeting with all the denominational leaders of his country beforehand. As a result, our new board for ICEJ-Senegal is led by the head of the Pentecostal churches nationwide, Pastor Raphael, while all the other denominations were also represented as members.
It was such a joy to fellowship, pray together and spend time with all these powerful ministers and to see how they took ownership of the vision which the Lord Himself has given for His Church concerning Israel! We now have veteran ministry leaders serving as ICEJ representatives in all ten provinces of Senegal, impacting the people with our message.

“Our God-given vision of connecting the churches with God’s purposes for Israel went deep into the hearts of these Christian leaders”

We also had a meeting with the office of the Speaker of Parliament, to share our vision and purpose as a ministry and how we want to be a blessing to the people of both Senegal and Israel.

NIGER
In Niger, the Holy Spirit did much the same as in Senegal as Rev. Maiga was able to lay the groundwork for a successful visit there well ahead of time. The Evangelical body in Niger was well represented in our meetings as the key spiritual leaders participated in the teaching seminars and the service inaugurating the new ICEJ-Niger branch. Our God-given vision of connecting the churches with God’s purposes for Israel went deep into the hearts of these Christian leaders.

What an honour it was to set apart with prayer and the laying on of hands Pastor Soumana as the new national director and Rev. Ali as the board chairman for ICEJ-Niger. These leaders will run with the vision and teach others! But the Lord had planned for us to reach out not only to the Body of Christ, but also to the government leaders of Niger.

In just four days’ time in Niger, myself and Rev. Maiga met with the Foreign Minister of Niger, Bazoum Mohamed, along with the Speaker of Parliament Hama Amadou and with the Minister of Interior Abba Moro.

Many of these government figures were Muslims and we made clear that we represent a global Christian ministry headquartered in Jerusalem and that we believe fully in the Bible and in the resurrection of Jesus. So it was refreshing to be warmly received by these government authorities, and we had very good and meaningful discussions with them.

Surprisingly, they all voiced the same message of wanting to see peace, reconciliation and good relationships with all religions and peoples. These leaders in Niger have a strong readiness to help their nation develop...
and prosper. Herein lies an open door for Christian ministries to go in, work together with the local body of Christ, and to do good!

The arenas of agriculture and water resources would be ideal areas for believers to bless this nation and contribute to the well-being of the more than 16 million people of Niger! What a picture! The local Church blessing Israel, preaching the Gospel and doing good as they assist their own people in getting up on their own feet! With God all these things are possible!

Finally, the Lord works in ways that sometimes astound us. The last meeting we had in Niger was with the Head of the Islamic community, Sheikh Omar Ismael. We shared with him our belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus and our faith in the whole of the Bible and how we as ICEJ are a Christian ministry connecting people to Israel. He in turn told us how in Niger the mindset is one of peace and tolerance – that it is different than radical Islam! During our conversation, he also expressed his view concerning freedom of worship, saying: “If someone says he is worshipping God, why should we hinder him”.

Please keep the body of Christ in Niger and all the people of that nation strong in your prayers! They want to move forward and not to go backward.

IVORY COAST
In addition to these two new ICEJ branches established during my recent 10-day visit to West Africa, we also had a very powerful new beginning for our ministry in the Ivory Coast, following a long and sad civil war in that nation. ICEJ Executive Director Dr. Jürgen Bühler joined us from Jerusalem at this stage of the trip, and together we saw a whole nation open for us once again. It was once more the perfect timing of the Holy Spirit!

It was beautiful to watch as the Lord used our ministry as an instrument to unify the body of Christ, which had been torn apart by the recent civil war in the Ivory Coast that ended last year. All the denominational leaders came together under the headship of Rev. Dr. Jean-Baptiste Nielsien, chairman of the Evangelical churches in the Ivory Coast, and put all their spiritual weight behind our ministry. There are more than four million Christians in the country and each of the leaders present have hundreds of local churches and pastors under their care, giving them great influence in their nation.

During the meetings, we set apart Rev. Kra as our new national director and Dr. Nielsien as chairman of our new board in the Ivory Coast. As in Senegal and Niger, the grace of God brought in strong and recognised Evangelical leaders to oversee our work there.

Doors also opened for us to meet with senior government leaders in the Ivory Coast, as we were received by Madame Jeanne Peuhmond, the Special Advisor to President Alassane Quattara, along with Deputy Foreign Minister Claude Dassys, and the Governor of Abidjan, Pierre Djédji Amondji. They all welcomed us warmly to their country.

The Deputy Foreign Minister told an interesting story concerning the relationship between his country and Israel. The first president of the nation, Houphouet Boigny, had made what he described as a “covenant” with Israel – this is the word he used – and as a result the nation had become the most prosperous in West Africa. For this reason, the current President, Quattara, deliberately made his first state visit after his inauguration especially to Israel, in order to re-establish that covenant. That is quite amazing for a Muslim leader!

Lastly of note, during our stay in the Ivory Coast, Jürgen and I also filmed three shows with “Light of the World”, a program broadcast on the Christian television network LM-TV, which reaches 48 countries and over 200 million people all across Africa.

TIME FOR THE NATIONS
Now is the time to come alongside God concerning His purposes for Israel and the nations! Get involved, keep on praying and stand with us financially according to the leading and prompting of the Holy Spirit in your heart. When we pray and work together, the doors will open for our ministry!
IN LATE FEBRUARY, the Norwegian branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem co-convened a major policy conference entitled the Oslo Symposium, featuring Israel's former Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon and other notable guest speakers in an effort to impact Norway's approach to Israel and the Middle East.

Numerous members of the Norwegian parliament, representing both the ruling and opposition parties, also attended the conference and many addressed the gathering on an array of topics ahead of new national elections later this year. The Norwegian and Israeli media covered the two-day event closely and much of the conference was broadcast live on Norwegian Christian TV.

Israel and the Middle East were special topics of interest addressed by Amb. Ayalon and other headline speakers at the Oslo Symposium. Ayalon encouraged Norwegian Christians to keep standing with and praying for Israel, and especially to pray for a further strengthening of the relationship between Israel and her Christian friends.

David Nekrutman, Director of the Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation in Efrat, appealed for Norway to return to its Biblical roots, and to realise that Judaism is its “older brother” in the faith.

Prof. Moshe Sharon from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem briefed the audience on the current situation in the Middle East, and stressed that Israel remains the most secure, stable and democratic country in a rapidly changing region.

Israel’s ambassador to Norway Naim Araidi, a Druze from the Galilee, noted that Israel does not ask Norway for any type of aid, but only for its understanding. “All we need is your friendship”, he said.

Several leading Norwegian political leaders responded in their remarks to the calls for a more positive stand towards Israel.

“'We want a government that both Israel and the Palestinians will have confidence in. Under the current government, Israel has lost confidence in Norway as a partner for peace', said Knut-Arild Hareide, leader of the Christian Democratic Party.

Siv Jensen, leader of the Progress Party, also criticised Norway's unconditioned financial support to the Palestinians, the dialogue between the government in Oslo and the terror militia Hamas, and the fact that the Norwegian government officially supported the Palestinian push for statehood at the United Nations last autumn.

Each year at the Oslo Symposium, an award is handed out in recognition of the late Norwegian cabinet minister Kåre Kristiansen, a strong friend of Israel who resigned from the Nobel Peace Prize Committee when the award was given to PLO chairman Yasser Arafat. The Kåre Kristiansen Award consists of a diploma, a painting and a gift of $US 20,000.

This year’s honouree was IDF soldier Gilad Schalit, who bravely survived five years as a Hamas captive in Gaza.

The committee felt his courage and strength were a true picture of the Israeli people for the world to see. His father Noam Schalit was on hand to receive the award.
IN MARCH, the ICEJ staff in Jerusalem and their families enjoyed a special weekend outing together in the Negev region of southern Israel. Staying at night in Mitzpe Ramon, which overlooks the breath-taking Ramon Crater, the staff ventured out each day to some incredible sites in the desert wilderness.

IN SEARCH OF SINAI
The highlight was an all-day excursion by jeep to Har Karkom, which some believe is the biblical Mount Sinai or Horeb where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Among the archaeological evidence lending credence to this theory is a ring of twelve stone pillars and a nearby altar dating to the time of the Exodus which fits the description of Exodus 20:24-26, and 24:4. Former ICEJ staff member Will Setz, a trained anthropologist who took part in many digs at Har Karkom, shared his wealth of knowledge on the site, including the fact that over 45,000 examples of ancient rock art can be found in and around the mountain – the largest such concentration of rock art in the entire Middle East.

COMMUNITY OF DAVID BEN GURION
The group also visited Sde Boker, a desert farming community where Israel’s founding prime minister David Ben Gurion retired in order to encourage settlement of the vast Negev region. The agenda also included a stop at the ruins of Tel Maresha and camel rides at Kfar Hanokdim, a Bedouin oasis located at the “lowest place on earth” near the Dead Sea.
EMBASSY HOSTS DR. BILLY WILSON

AMONG THE MANY GUESTS AND GROUPS visiting the Embassy headquarters in Jerusalem lately, we were privileged to host Dr. Billy Wilson of Empowered21 in late February for a time of fellowship, ministry and strategy meetings in connection with a major Christian gathering set for Pentecost Sunday in May 2015 here in Jerusalem.

PRESIDENT OF ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY

Already a well-known and respected figure in Evangelical circles, Dr. Wilson was recently appointed as the new president of Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. While taking on these new duties, he will continue with the Empowered21 movement he has been heading around the globe. The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is a global board member of Empowered21 and is helping to organise the week-long celebration of Pentecost in May 2015, which is expected to draw some 15,000 Christians to Jerusalem.
As the Passover festival approached in March, the ICEJ was busy preparing food baskets and other items for distribution to needy Israeli families in time for this revered Jewish holiday.

On a beautiful spring day in mid-March, the ICEJ AID department led a group of ten staff members for a busy work day in Haifa stuffing Passover baskets for local residents. The gift boxes contained unleavened matza bread, grape juice, kosher flour and cookies, and many other food supplies that were given to five hundred needy families in northern Israel for their Pessach seder meals.

The packaging was done in the sunny outdoors at the Haifa Home for Holocaust survivors, and a dozen survivors who live at the ICEJ’s unique assisted-living home joined in the work and fun. The Israeli television network Channel One sent a film crew to cover the unusual interaction between Holocaust survivors and Christian Embassy volunteers for the main evening news.

“We help needy families for Passover”, explained Yosef, a Holocaust survivor and Haifa Home resident, as he quickly packed food items into boxes.

“We are stacking quite fast but that is fine”, said Shula, another survivor at the home. “We have to do it so everything is ready when the families come to pick up the packages.”

“It is a wonderful day. I really like it very much to work together with others to help those who need support,” chimed in ICEJ staff member Pnina Zubarev. “I’m working with Yosef and Shula, who are 70 or 80 years old but they act like young people do!”

“It is always good to go out on these hands-on work days to make a real difference in other peoples’ lives. That is why I came to Israel”, added ICEJ co-worker Matthew Norris.

“As Christians we love to show our support for Israel. To help needy Jewish families celebrate the holiday of Passover with the rest of the nation especially gives me a lot of joy”, said ICEJ AID director Nicole Yoder.

“I love to do things for people in need and it is most wonderful that we can do it together with Holocaust survivors”, concurred her ICEJ AID colleague Yudit Setz.

Each year, the Christian Embassy provides traditional Passover baskets to impoverished families all across Israel, including needy new immigrants, single-parent homes, Ethiopian Jews, the elderly and especially Holocaust survivors.

To watch the Channel One TV news report on the ICEJ Passover preparations, go to:
WWW.ICEJUSA.ORG/PREPARING-PASSOVER
ICEJ STAFF JOIN JERUSALEM MARATHON

ON THE FIRST OF MARCH, nine staff members from the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem joined some 20,000 Israeli and international runners in the annual Jerusalem Marathon.

Three staff took part in the gruelling hilly course of the 21 kilometer half-marathon, while the remaining six joined the 4.2 km ‘fun run’. All the ICEJ runners wore colourful T-shirts with the Christian Embassy logo, and each managed to ‘finish the race’.

The annual event was launched three years ago by Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat, an avid runner himself, and the proceeds go to benefit the Israel Cancer Society. When staff member Emanuel Mfoukou caught up with the mayor early in the race and wished him well, Barkat quipped that “everyone should enjoy the downhill parts”.

The winner of this year’s full marathon was Abraham Kabeto Kitla, an Ethiopian runner who set a new track record with 2:16:29, while the female class was won by another Ethiopian, Mihiret Anamo Anotonios, finishing the full 42 km course in 2:47:26.40.

Later in March, two staff members also represented the ICEJ at the Tel Aviv Marathon, which was expected to draw some 35,000 runners.

JEWISH AGENCY HONOURS ICEJ ALIYAH DIRECTOR

RECENTLY, the Jewish Agency for Israel presented a certificate of appreciation to A. Howard Flower, director of the ICEJ’s Aliyah Operations, recognising his dedicated work and the immense contributions of the Christian Embassy towards the return to Israel of tens of thousands of Russian-speaking Jews from the former Soviet Union. The award was delivered at a ceremony in St. Petersburg by the Jewish Agency director for the Northwest region of the Russian Federation.

ICEJ RUSSIA

Flower, who also serves as national director for the growing ICEJ-Russia branch, first came to St. Petersburg in 1992 with a vision to help with the mass aliyah then taking place. Before long, he had joined with the ICEJ’s efforts in moving thousands of Russian Jews through Finland to Israel. In the year 2000, he also officially registered our Russian branch. The offices were set up in a building not far from the Jewish Agency and he opened a guest home for Jewish families coming from far away cities in Russia on their way to Israel.

DIRECTOR OF ALIYAH OPERATIONS

In 2006, Flower was promoted to director of the ICEJ’s Aliyah Operations and began to expand the work into Belarus and the Baltic countries. He also looked farther West and started ‘fishing’ for Russian-speaking Jews who had moved to Germany, the United States and Canada.

When Flower learned of growing Muslim anti-Semitism in Western Europe, the ICEJ also began sponsoring flights for Jews from France and Sweden. More recently, the ICEJ has sponsored flights for Ethiopian Jews and the Bnei Menashe of India. Meanwhile the aliyah work continues in the vast Russian republic, as well as in Latvia, Lithuania and Uzbekistan.

Overall, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has helped more than 115,000 Jews come home to Israel since 1989, and Howard Flower has had a direct hand in many of these homecomings.
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