TOUCHING HEAVEN
IMPACTING ISRAEL’S FUTURE THROUGH EDUCATION

NIGERIA BRANCH REPORT

THE GREAT PARALLELS OF
PASSOVER
BY JUHA KETOLA
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

Just a few days ago at a meeting with Rabbi Yona Metger, the (Ashkenazi) Chief Rabbi of Israel, we could see once again that we do live in a new season in Jewish-Christian relations.

“What unites us is our mutual faith in the God of Abraham and this makes us all sons of Abraham,” he told our delegation, which included 45 Christian ministers from Brazil.

This was a statement which, until recent times, would not have been so easily said or rarely heard, but now was declared with such clarity from a senior representative of the Jewish state and people.

In our ministry at the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, we do see many new doors opening in Israel and some of these exciting developments you can read about in this issue of our magazine. God has placed on our hearts a new emphasis on education. Please pray for these efforts and consider partnering with us in our exciting new educational projects. You will read more about them inside.

More doors are opening even as I write this greeting and we will provide details on these in the coming weeks and months. Please pray for us as open doors are always seasons of decisions. We need wisdom and guidance from God as we want to build His house and kingdom, and not our own.

The Passover season is ahead of us and it reminds us of the central component of our salvation, the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus died 2000 years ago exactly on Passover Eve, at the very hour when thousands of Passover lambs were being slaughtered in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish historians write that every year on that day a constant stream of blood mixed with water was flowing out of the Temple into the Kidron Valley. The prophet Ezekiel alludes to this in chapter 47.

When the centurion pierced the side of Jesus, water and blood also flowed down his body. This stream of salvation has never ceased to flow until this day and it has transformed the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world over many generations. So let us make it a season of thankfulness for the life-changing truth of the Cross!

Have a blessed Passover and Easter season!

Yours in Christ,

DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER
ICEJ Executive Director

CIRCLE PHOTO: Cross and sunrise on Mount Zion, Jerusalem, Israel.

For Magazine Archives
visit www.icejusa.org/wfJ
Approximately one third of Israel’s some 200,000 Holocaust Survivors are impoverished, struggling with illness, or living alone. In 2009, ICEJ began a partnership with the local charity Yad Ezer L’Haver to provide a Home especially for needy and lonely survivors.

As Israel observes its annual Holocaust Remembrance Day in April, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been invited to join senior Israeli government figures and Jewish leaders from around the world at the official ceremonies at Yad Vashem.
THE GREAT PARALLELS OF PASSOVER

“WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD, I WILL PASS OVER YOU” – EXODUS 12:13

“INDEED CHRIST, OUR PASSOVER, WAS SACRIFICED FOR US” – 1 CORINTHIANS 5:7

BY JUHA KETOLA

THE GREAT THEME OF THE BIBLE is the fall and sinful nature of humanity and then God’s provision of atonement and reconciliation for humankind through Christ, the Redeemer. Sin has separated us from God, but God’s gift in the resurrected Lord has brought us back near to Him.

TEMPLE SACRIFICES
The purpose of the animal sacrifices and ordinances of service and worship to God in the Tabernacle of Moses in the desert, and later on in the Temple in Jerusalem, was to provide a way of escape for the Israelites from the wrath of God towards sin into His favour, protection, life and blessings.

Again and again among the Israelites, humanity’s failures, imperfections and sins were transferred onto innocent animals to save and preserve human life. The guilty man had to bring an innocent animal to the priest, who then slaughtered it and let the man go free. The punishment for sin – death – was thus removed from upon the guilty person and their sin-consciousness would be changed into a consciousness of righteousness (Psalm 40:6-8, Hebrews 10:1-22).

This ultimate and final sacrifice would be the fulfilment of all the sacrifices in the Law of Moses, would be a once and for all sacrifice performed just once, and the place for it would be in the holy mountain of the Lord – in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33).

THE LAMB OF GOD
The true Lamb of God would arrive upon the scene and His name would be “Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”. He would be called “Jesus” (Yeshua or “salvation” in Hebrew), for He would save His people from their sins (Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 1:21)! And Jesus, our Lord and Messiah, truly did come and gave himself as the ultimate sacrifice for his own people during the celebration of Passover. And not only for his own Jewish people but for the whole world... “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

PASSOVER
The story in the whole Bible where the God of Israel has portrayed the power of the blood of Jesus in a narrative form – and concealed it from the notice of hardened hearts – is the historical exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

Every family in all Israel had to take a lamb – a lamb without blemish for each household – and then kill it at twilight (Exodus 12). The shed blood of the innocent lamb was then to be taken and put on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses. For the Lord had proclaimed: “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” (Exodus 12:13)

Every family living in the land of Egypt – both among the Egyptians and the Israelites alike – was in danger of having death enter into their household to rob their first-born sons. The judgment of God was about to fall on the land of Egypt because of their idol worship. We can read in the book of Ezekiel that the Israelites in Egypt also had fallen into the same snare and temptation of idol worship and thus death was about to fall upon their families alike (Ezekiel 20:7-10). But God provided a way of escape for His own people!

The penalty of death and the judgment of God could be transferred from their families onto an innocent lamb slaughtered on their behalf. Someone had to die as the consequence of their sins. But this someone was not one of their own family – not the firstborn, not the father nor the mother – but a male lamb.
The sins and resulting death of each Israelite family were transferred and laid upon the lamb, and the life and innocence of the lamb was transferred upon the family. The lamb died – and the family, including the firstborn, lived!

When the angel of death was then passing through the land of Egypt destroying life among the Egyptian families, whenever he saw the lamb's blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts of the Israelite families, he passed over. Death had already come! The destroyer then did not come into these houses to strike them a second time and the families inside were in complete safety!

Only the Israelites had been told to act in this manner. The instructions for saving their lives had come through the mouth of Moses and they had heeded the word of the Lord – and they lived! The punishment for their idol worship and sins had been laid on the lamb and the families were forgiven because of the blood.

This proved to be life-saving knowledge from God spoken through the mouth of Moses, who faithfully had delivered the word of God to them (Exodus 12:21). Then the elders and each family in turn had just as faithfully passed on the word from one family to another – and so the whole nation of Israel had been warned, instructed and as a result had been saved!

Remember: “Indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” Our death and hell was transferred onto him on the cross, and his life and righteousness was transferred upon us through his resurrection. When we believe, his life is in us and the life we live is his and we will never die! (Galatians 2:20, John 11:26)

THE GOOD NEWS
The message of the Passover lamb from Moses' mouth spread among the hundreds of thousands of Israelites in two weeks' time. The message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ who died on the cross as our Passover lamb has also been taken to millions of people and to the four corners of the earth in two thousand years!

The truth about His death, burial and resurrection from the grave has been preached and believed on in the nations! Whoever believes and heeds this life-saving knowledge which was in the mouth of Jesus our Lord, surely shall be saved from eternal death, hell and destruction! Jesus says: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:54)

LIFE FOR YOUR FAMILY
There is a great Saviour and Redeemer, a Mediator between God and man – the man Christ Jesus! There is life, protection and blessing for your whole family – it is in his blood! ☺
For Jewish families in Israel the spring holiday of Passover is a very special occasion, and many begin preparing for this joyous biblical festival well in advance. Yet it can also be a difficult season for those lacking the means to celebrate this sacred holiday according to custom. So ICEJ AID is already at work preparing to assist hundreds of poor families when the Pesach holiday arrives in late March, when we will provide traditional Passover baskets to impoverished families, needy new immigrants, single-parent homes, the elderly and especially Holocaust survivors.

As the time-honoured Passover Seder meal approaches, latest figures show that more than one-third of Israelis are living below the poverty line. Local charities will need to provide basic food staples to hundreds of thousands of families. Thus we look to you, our friends and supporters, to help us meet the needs of as many Jewish families as we can this holiday season.

Don’t miss this optimal time for Christians to comfort Israel’s poorest sectors, as we help them celebrate freedom with dignity this year.

Please give a generous and timely donation today by visiting:

www.icejusa.org/passover
THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM and its enduring legacy have become one of the most impacting events in world history. This single individual set in motion a redemption process which would transform the world. No wonder the book of Galatians refers to those who have set their trust in the God of Abraham and His Messiah as “sons of Abraham”.

The book of Genesis gives us an important key to understand the unique calling of Abraham. It records that God said: “For I have known him [Abraham], in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.” (Genesis 18:19)

One major ingredient for Abraham to succeed – to see all that “He has spoken to him” coming to fruition – would reside in the education and teaching of his children and the generations after them. If Abraham would instruct “his children and his household after him” to walk in the ways and principles of God, this would ensure the promises which God had spoken over Abraham’s life.

Consequently, the education and equipping of youth has become one of the pillars of Judaism until today. Other passages of the Bible strongly encourage the training of children. In fact, the most central confession of the Jewish people, the Shema prayer, relates to the education of children.

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

In the Jewish home it was mainly the father’s task to teach the children about the Bible, but even beyond the home very early in Israel’s history a system of learning and education was established. In the times of Jesus, all of Israel was covered by a network of schools. This emphasis on education was so strong that according to the Talmud a city which did not have a school for children “should be either destroyed or excommunicated”. Some Talmudic sages even declared that part of the reason why Jerusalem fell was because of the city’s “neglect of the education of its children”.

Already in Jesus’ times school attendance for children was compulsory, and by the age of ten a child would have studied most of the books of the Bible. According to the Bible scholar Alfred Edersheim, the
success story of the Jewish people. It is no coincidence that 30% of all Nobel prizes in science have been awarded to Jews and that Israel today leads the world in patents granted per capita. Nor is this due to a mere intellectual advantage, but it is based on a biblical culture of study and learning.

This emphasis on education and learning also has become critical to having a long-term impact on developing nations. Investing in education rather than just mere food programs empowers the recipients to take charge of their lives and to uplift families and even whole communities.

For this reason, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has felt the need to put an increased emphasis within our social work towards the empowerment and education of Israel’s youth. It is not that Israel’s education system is in need of program – the first of its kind in Israel – was so successful that it attracted the attention of the Ministry of Education. It became obvious to ministry officials that after only a few years the prospects for these disadvantaged students had dramatically improved.

As a result, the Ministry of Education asked us to take the “Touching the Horizon” program to as many schools as possible. The ministry agreed to assist with two-thirds of the operating costs of the program and we have committed to sponsor the remaining one-third. Our vision is to expand the mentoring program to 30 schools across Israel and thereby empower hundreds of young Jewish and Arab teens-at-risk to succeed in life. What is most exciting and unique about this project is that – at our request – the curriculum will include special classes about co-existence between cultures and religions and in particular classes on Jewish-Christian relations.

Another exciting door which has just opened is a possible new partnership with the Center for Excellence in Jerusalem. This premier scholastic center boasts an enrollment of some of the most brilliant students from all across Israel and shapes them into future leaders of Israel. Some of these gifted children come from poor families and require financial assistance and the Center has asked the Christian Embassy to partner with them in providing the best education to the brightest students regardless of need.

In coming months we will keep you informed on this and other exciting opportunities opening to us in the area of educating Israeli youths. Please join with us is this inspiring vision and task to shape and impact the future of Israel. It is a great calling which promises blessing to all involved.

Remember that Jesus himself said: “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:10)

Heaven indeed is watching as we care for the young and underprivileged in Israel! Send your donation today to help us make a difference!
In February last year, a report released by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had encouraging news for Israel, finding that it is the second-most educated country in the world. However, the report also noted that the educational improvements did not occur evenly, meaning that children from underprivileged families in Israel are falling even further behind the norm and thus are in greater need of help to better their lives.

Over the decades of our ministry here in the land, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been privileged to touch and change the lives of numerous Israeli children who otherwise would have had little hope of success.

NEW IMMIGRANTS
Many of these children in need of help in their education are from poorer immigrant families. So the ICEJ decided to work with a school in Ramle, where a lot of students have arrived with their families from South America. Most need help with Hebrew, as they have been in the country for just a few years and are still struggling to read, write and speak the local language. They hail from countries like Peru, Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico, and often come from families in lower socio-economic levels. Through ICEJ supported programs, they are now making great headway.

ETHIOPIAN STUDENTS
A large group of immigrants which need our help in furthering their education is the Ethiopian Jewish community. Ethiopia is a developing country that still has very low educational standards, while Israel is a modern, Western state. The absorption of Ethiopian immigrants into Israeli society has proven difficult even if simply due to the vast cultural differences. The difficulties in learning the Hebrew language and in getting a quality education so they can find jobs matching their talents are an even bigger challenge.

For the majority of young Ethiopian Jewish immigrants, it is hard to meet the educational requirements for admittance into university studies. But the ICEJ is committed to helping increase the number of young Ethiopian Jews who can gain access to higher education and thereby integrate better into Israeli society and achieve social mobility. To reach this goal, we are seeking to expand our sponsorship of the Ruppin Academic Center’s unique program for Ethiopian students, which helps these young immigrants fulfil their academic potential.
One student, Gideon, comes from a family of ten and was 8 years old when they moved to Israel. He finished the preparatory course at Ruppin, but by then he was 28 and thus too old to receive financial assistance from the government for university studies. Thanks to support from ICEJ AID, Gideon began his studies and also took a special intercultural mediation training course offered by Ruppin. The school did not place any age limit on Gideon nor require an entrance aptitude test.

“I came with a gap in my education compared to other students. It entails a great amount of effort in learning”, Gideon admitted. “Without the help that we received in educational reinforcement, dorms funding, living stipends, scholarships and the social accompaniment – I would not have succeeded. I truly thank you!”

**DRUZE SCHOOL**

Along with the special Ruppin program for Ethiopian students, the Christian Embassy also has been supporting schools in Druze villages in the Galilee. Through our cooperation with local governments and educators, we have purchased computers, desks, headphones and books for numerous classrooms. The computers in classrooms have been shown to improve discipline and help children with short attention span to keep up with their peers.

All Druze schools teach honour, ethics, social responsibility and good citizenship. The children, who speak Arabic at home, learn Hebrew at an early age and quickly move on to learn English as well. The ICEJ’s help has been vital in providing a good learning environment for these children. Recently, the head of the parent’s council in one Druze town expressed his deep gratitude to ICEJ AID, saying: “We are touched that Christians around the world choose to support the education of the Druze.”

**MESSIANIC SCHOOL**

Meantime, the ICEJ is also assisting a unique school run by Messianic believers in the heart of Jerusalem called Makor HaTikvah (“Source of Hope”), which teaches grades 1 to 9. The beautiful but aging building where the school is located is barely holding the more than 80 students, and is in need of repairs. A number of remodelling projects have greatly improved the school grounds and every available inch of space is put to good use. The ICEJ made a significant donation toward the purchase of books and filled the shelves of the school library. In addition, the Christian Embassy invested in tutoring programs for students at the school. In the coming year, the ICEJ also will be helping Makor HaTikvah with the purchase of urgently-needed new computers.

**TOUCHING THE HORIZON**

Finally, a special educational project which the ICEJ has helped develop is the “Touching the Horizon” mentoring program. This program provides equal academic opportunities to youths from underprivileged families, by offering after-school activities and trained mentors who help at-risk teens through the last difficult years of high school – when many might otherwise drop out and turn to drugs or crime. The counselling and follow-up continues even into their years of army service.

The Touching the Horizon program is unique in its ability to be set up anywhere in Israel. After only a few years, the ICEJ-funded pilot project has proven so successful in salvaging troubled youths from the cycle of poverty and violence, that Israel’s Ministry of Education has adopted it for nationwide implementation. The Ministry will be paying two-thirds of the costs of expanding the program to 30 schools, and the ICEJ has committed to covering the remaining one-third. We are excited about the hundreds of young lives that will be turned completely around by this initiative.

Through these and other educational projects, the ICEJ is impacting the next generation in Israel. Please consider partnering with us as we help Israeli youngsters grow into adults with their minds filled with knowledge and wonder and their career goals within reach. Together we can help shape the future of this nation!
Meet the Volunteers

TANIA AND STEPHAN VORSTER from South Africa

BY AARON HECHT

STEPHAN AND TANIA VORSTER are one of the married couples on staff at the ICEJ’s global headquarters in Jerusalem, where Stephan manages the IT (computers and internet) department and Tania serves as the Finance Office coordinator.

Stephan is originally from Windhoek, Namibia, and studied computer science at North-West University in South Africa. While there he met Tania, who was born in Zimbabwe and was pursuing a degree in Math and English.

Shortly after their studies, they married and settled in White River, where they joined the Calvary Assemblies of God fellowship.

In 2009 they felt a clear calling to come volunteer in Israel. Through a close relative they were introduced to the leaders of the local ICEJ-South Africa branch. Dave Wilken, the branch chairman who had worked on the ICEJ staff in Jerusalem in the 1980s, shared about the Christian Embassy’s mission and connected the Vorsters with the head office.

They arrived in Jerusalem in August 2009.

“By fulfilling our individual roles within the ICEJ, we believe we are both contributing towards the greater vision of comforting God’s people and teaching the Church concerning the significance of Israel in God’s sovereign plan”, says Tania.

“Being a part of this ministry and simply living in the land has its many blessings and challenges, yet it also has greatly enriched our personal lives and understanding of Biblical truths. It has been a tool in God’s hand shaping us in so many ways.”
We feel privileged to have this opportunity.” “We came from a church background where there was little teaching concerning the significance of the nation of Israel in God’s redemptive plan”, notes Stephan. “We wanted to be a part of a ministry that promotes God’s truth in relation to Israel worldwide, and is actively involved in making a difference within the nation of Israel.”

“We love being in Israel. It is undoubtedly a calling from God to live and serve as part of a ministry here. It is a life-changing experience”, he adds.

“Stephan and Tania Vorster oversee key areas of our daily operations with professionalism and grace”, commented ICEJ Executive Director Dr. Jürgen Bühler. “They are valued members of our staff and contribute much to the family atmosphere here.”

Outside work hours, the Vorsters love to explore the land. “We enjoy venturing out over weekends to places of historical and biblical significance, to just wander the streets of Jerusalem, or to simply enjoy the beauty of Israel’s many attractions both on and off the beaten track”, says Stephan.

Stephan is also an avid photographer who loves to capture the visual beauty of Israel, focusing mainly on landscapes, nature and travel photography. You can visit his web gallery at www.stephanvorster.com

Meantime, Tania is an artist with a distinct, playful style and loves to capture with palette and canvass the cultural essence and flavour of Israel and her people. Her paintings can be seen at www.taniasgallery.com

ARTWORK BY TANIA. Using a vibrant palette in acrylics, Tania’s paintings portray a sensitivity to her surrounds, and a passion for life and people.
In February 2009, my husband Wim and I mourned the loss of Na’il, one of four severely handicapped children who Israeli authorities placed in our care as foster parents. The fourth anniversary of his death fell recently near Tu B’Shvat – the annual Jewish arbour day when trees are planted all over the Land of Israel. To honour the memory of Na’il, we decided to work through the Jewish National Fund and ICEJ AID to plant a “garden” of 70 trees that would also benefit a worthy social aid project.

Over the last 100 years, the JNF has planted more than 240 million trees in Israel. For the Jewish people, planting a tree is a sign of hope and life. American friends had already planted two trees in 2009 in tribute to Na’il, who had rare skin and development disorders and never saw his 15th birthday.

We invited friends to give towards the new memorial garden for Na’il and channelled the funds through the AID department of the Christian Embassy, which searched for a local charitable organisation to bless with the stand of trees.

ICEJ AID learned about two special projects near Kiryat Shmona – in northern Israel. One was a unique school for special needs children from Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze families across the region. The other project was a rehabilitative day center where special needs adults come to work. My heart rejoiced! Both were so fitting!

In late January, Wim and I left Jerusalem early one morning for the long journey to Kiryat Shmona. Tu B’Shvat was the next day, so the two events were timed nicely. The sky was sunny and beautiful. Ishai Adler, principal of the Shechafim school, gave us a warm welcome in Hebrew and a quick tour of the school. The moment we entered the special education facility, I immediately felt at home. When our foster children were small, they attended similar schools in Jerusalem.

However, this school was blessed with so much more space, inside and outside, than the schools in Jerusalem! There was plenty of playground equipment, a greenhouse where children learn to feel, touch and even taste, plus an herb garden and a petting zoo.

A small ‘choir’ of children from the school sang and a few speeches were presented. Then we moved to the area prepared to plant some of the 40 citrus trees we were donating to the school. With help from the staff, some of the handicapped children took part in the tree planting.

Thus the area was transformed into a park to be enjoyed by the children and staff. Wind chimes were hung, winding paths installed suitable for wheelchairs and strollers, and drinking fountains hewn from rock were equipped with special handles. Strewn alongside the path were boulders and rocks, which were configured by volunteer artists into animal shapes. There was an elephant, a whale, and more to come.

Next, we visited the adult rehab center and planted 30 trees to expand a garden surrounding their main building. The spacious courtyard was full of guests, including children from a local high school who volunteer at the center. Sigal Kabas, director of the center, welcomed us like old friends.

Wim and I came to Israel from Holland many years ago to bless God’s people. In return, we have been blessed in abundance to see projects like these happen. ☺

Wim van der Zande is head of the ICEJ mailing department and his wife Petra is an author of numerous books on life in Israel and biblical themes.
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READING THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS

BY DAVID PARSONS

THE RECENT ISRAELI ELECTIONS could well go down as a milestone in the nation’s modern history, given its encouraging signs of a maturing within the body politic of the Jewish state. In particular, an unprecedented number of voters looked past tribal loyalties and the traditional hawks-and-doves divide in favour of calls by a new generation of leaders for uniting as one people to solve some of the country’s longstanding domestic problems.

For most of the campaign season these elections seemed headed for a forgone conclusion, with Benjamin Netanyahu widely expected to return as head of a government tilting ever more to the Right. One opinion poll in the waning days of the campaign found that an overwhelming 80% of Israelis were convinced he would retain his seat as prime minister.

Yet that sense of inevitably actually hurt Netanyahu at the ballot box. Many voters
valued his veteran leadership and were confident he would still be at the helm, but they also sought to steer him in their preferred direction – by opting for either Naftali Bennett on his right or Yair Lapid to his left.

The surprise results have meant that Netanyahu indeed will preside over the next coalition government but from a weakened position. Yet he is flanked by two fresh voices in Bennett and Lapid who offered a new vision for Israel’s future built on a common national identity and a sharing of national burdens.

Normally, Israelis vote with the nation’s great peace and security issues foremost on their minds, or they simply vote for their respective ‘tribes’.

Peace and security were still important to Israeli voters this time, but as they looked around the region they saw very little that Israelis can do right now to alter their worsening strategic situation.

The majority still supports a two-state solution to the conflict with the Palestinians but they also know there is no genuine peace partner at present on the other side. The Arab Spring continues to wreak havoc in Syria, Egypt and elsewhere, but Israel has few means to influence its direction. And the Iranian nuclear threat remains an urgent concern, but the nation was waiting for the second Obama administration to round itself out and begin charting an updated course for the international community to stop Tehran’s nuclear ambitions.

Meantime, there has been a political stalemate for decades between the five main tribes in Israel – the Ashkenazi (European), Sephardic (Middle Eastern), ultra-Orthodox and Russian Jews, plus the Arab community. Each represents about 20% of the population and they have been perennially locked in rivalries with each other for their share of the collective pie.

The new generation of leaders have now called for an end to this tribalism and a unified focus on trying to solve those things at home which can be solved – such as growing poverty, rising costs of living, the affordable housing crunch, and an equalising of the burden of national service.

As the new undisputed leader of the settler movement, Bennett spoke of the anti-Zionist haredim and even the Arabs as “our brothers”, who must be respected as equal partners in shaping Israel’s future.

Lapid voiced a similar message, explaining that after more than 60 years of nationhood the various competing tribes have realised their rivals are not going to disappear and must be dealt with fairly and equally. The son of a staunch secularist, he even admitted that the ultra-religious Jews had “won” in their battle with the European socialists to define “Israeli-ness”, but that this victory also carries the cost of national responsibility.

“We can’t run the Israeli economy without you as partners”, Lapid recently told a class of ultra-Orthodox college students. “If an Ethiopian child in Netivot is hungry, it’s your responsibility as much as mine. You cannot say: ‘I only give to haredi charities.’”

It remains to be seen whether these new leaders will be able to keep their campaign promises or become like so many other past politicians. But it is already clear that their unifying message resonated with Israeli voters.

In a distinct way, this is reminiscent of the ancient Israelite tribes under Joshua, when Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh had already conquered their allotted lands, yet they still crossed over the Jordan to help their fellow tribes possess their inheritances (See Joshua chapters 1 and 4).

God obviously sought a clear division of tribal lines within ancient Israel. He commanded that one tribe could not take the lands of another, and each could only marry within their respective tribe. So the Almighty wanted to maintain this diversity. Yet He also wanted them to become one nation, knowing that there is strength in unity.

The prophet Ezekiel, in his amazing vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (chapter 37), foretells of a day when God would re-gather the split kingdoms of Judah and Israel from among the nations and “make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all... David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd.”

Israel today is indeed a remarkable nation of Jews gathered from over 100 countries around the globe, who have come back as distinct tribes with their own languages, cultures and customs, but God has been slowly forging them back together into one nation. They have a glorious future ahead of them, far more glorious than they even realise. And perhaps the elections of 2013 were a small but encouraging glimpse of His hand at work.
Knesset Honors ICEJ-Brazil Director for Bringing Christians to Israel

APOSTLE RENÉ TERRA NOVA HAS BROUGHT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF VISITORS

BY DAVID PARSONS

AT A GALA BANQUET IN JERUSALEM in late January, the Knesset and Israel’s Ministry for Tourism honoured Apostle René Terra Nova, national director of ICEJ-Brazil, for his exceptional efforts to bring tens of thousands of Christian visitors to Israel over the past two decades.

Seven Israeli parliamentarians active in the Knesset Christian Allies’ Caucus and special guest Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barkat were on hand at the King David Hotel when the award was delivered during the 7th annual “Night to Honour Israel’s Christian Allies”, an event also co-sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism, World Jewish Congress and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.

Dr. Petra Heldt, director of the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel, was also honoured at the awards dinner for her steadfast...
efforts to build understanding and support for Israel among the historic churches in the Holy Land.

“This is not just an award for me. This is my life’s work and passion”, Terra Nova said in receiving the tourism award.

“I am here to pay a debt which we Christians owe to the Jewish people”, he explained. “My nation owes this debt as well. We need to dream and Israel inspires us to dream. You dreamed of a resurrected nation. Because Israel has been restored, you have shown restoration can come to the world. Thank you for inspiring us to dream.”

Terra Nova heads the International Restoration Ministries in Manaus, Brazil, and oversees a network of churches throughout Latin America that numbers some six million followers.

“This is not just an award for me. This is my life’s work and passion.”

—RENÉ TERRA NOVA

He noted that he first visited Israel in 1991, in order to “spy out” the land like Joshua. He later became director of the Brazilian branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, and has led groups as large as 1,500 to the ICEJ’s annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem. Through his own tours and those organised by pastors under his supervision, he says he has lost count of the tens of thousands of Christian pilgrims his ministry has now brought to Israel.

Terra Nova was accompanied on his visit to Jerusalem by 45 of his network’s leading apostles and pastors. The group also was hosted at the Chief Rabbinate offices in Jerusalem by (Ashkenazi) Chief Rabbi Yona Metger, who thanked the visitors for coming to Israel and congratulated Terra Nova on receiving the tourism award.

“It is rare for someone to have the influence that you have”, said Chief Rabbi Metzger. “May God give you strength to continue in this way, to bring more and more Christians here. After all, we are all sons of Abraham.”

“You know we serve Jesus, that is our conviction”, Terra Nova responded to his host. “But God has put a deep love for Zion in our hearts. He has given us a strong desire to come here, some of us more than 30 times, and to invest in Israel. We have millions of Christians in Brazil who feel this way.”
Every year in the month of January, thousands of men and women of God from many different nations gather together in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, to pray and intercede for their countries and to be trained and sharpened in the Word and purposes of God. This annual prayer conference is called the “Global Prayer-quake” and is organized by the apostle Mosy Madugba, whom God has put in charge of many things in His Kingdom and who is also the National Director of ICEJ-Nigeria.

The ICEJ sent a senior leadership team from Jerusalem to be part of this year’s awesome prayer gathering in Port Harcourt. The delegation included ICEJ Executive Director Dr. Jürgen Bühler, Arise leader Jani Salokangas and myself.

As soon as we arrived from Israel to the Port Harcourt Airport, located in the Rivers state in southern Nigeria, we were transported to the conference center and rushed into the service. Approaching the venue, we could hear beautiful worship music and the strong, powerful sound of voices in earnest prayer. The next instant, we could see thousands of people in colourful clothing and national costumes freely positioning themselves in front of God in a service led by Mosy Madugba.

Immediately, we also saw and experienced afresh that the African people know how to worship and praise the Lord with ‘everything that is within them’! Forgetting themselves, they were filled with God-consciousness and set out to seek Him in a very personal,
intimate and real way. It is wonderful to be part of a worship service where God truly is the focus of everyone present!

The conference delegates were from 26 different nations and during the next six days the speakers covered a wide variety of timely themes, many of them directed especially to leaders in the Body of Christ.

The ICEJ delegation from Jerusalem also taught on God’s plans for Israel and His covenants with the Jewish people in various ministry sessions. The youth were exposed to our message as well!

On several occasions and in different ways, we were brought before the entire gathering of 10,000 leaders and delegates to share and to pray. Thus, we were able to reinforce the voice of the Holy Spirit concerning Israel in the hearts and minds of these precious African brothers and sisters. We do believe that Africa, and particularly Nigeria, will be a great and powerful blessing for Israel in the days ahead. And not only for Israel, but for the whole world!

In Nigeria – and especially in the southern part of the country – the move of the Holy Spirit can be seen clearly and is confirmed with many physical evidences as well. The Body of Christ is very active and growing in number, reaching out to their communities with the Gospel, winning souls, planting new churches and experiencing signs and wonders that accompany the preaching of the Word.

The vision that these precious men and women of God are treasuring in their hearts is big, yet they are following it and experiencing the fulfilment of it! Just think about it: to have a local church within every five-minutes walking distance! This is what they are pursuing!

The influence of the Nigerian churches and their leaders is extending out to the local, provincial and national political leaders of the nation as well. The believers in Nigeria indeed are having a great impact on the whole of their societies, the power of the Gospel can be felt at all levels in every city, and they are truly leaving a mark on their own country and on the entire continent of Africa.

Finally, these powerful ministers of the Gospel are clearly placing Israel in their preaching and in their theology right where she is in the Bible; and they are blessing her!

The powerful move of the Holy Spirit is sweeping now in the southern hemisphere of our planet and it will be very interesting to see the outcome of it in the near future. Africa and Latin America are coming within the blessing and power of the Spirit – but what will happen to Europe and the West in general? 😊
ICEJ MARKS HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY IN HAIFA

BY BIRTE SCHOLZ

As the world marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day on the 27th of January, an ICEJ delegation joined about 150 Holocaust survivors, 50 Israeli Air Force and police recruits, and a number of honoured guests for a special ceremony in Haifa. The event took place at the ICEJ’s Home for Holocaust Survivors, and included the lighting of a flame in memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Nazi genocide. It was evident that each resident of the Haifa Home feels personal pain on these memorial days because they all lost family members in the Shoah.

Israel’s (Ashkenazi) Chief Rabbi Yona Metzger, Kadima party chairman Shaul Mofaz, Haifa Home director Shimon Sabag, and ICEJ-Germany national director Gottfried Bühler delivered greetings at the gathering.

“We will do everything we can to encourage especially the younger generation to remember the past and the Holocaust and to stand with Israel and the Jewish people”, Bühler assured the audience.

The Jewish holiday of Tu Bishvat arrived one day earlier, so the ceremonies also included the traditional planting of trees, with Holocaust survivors and air force and police recruits joining to plant saplings at the Holocaust memorial erected beside the Haifa Home.

“I liked it very much but I was also sad. In my heart I was back in the woods of my childhood, which I will never forget”, said Esti, one of the resident Holocaust survivors.

“Esti had to fight for survival in the woods of Poland after German soldiers killed my mother and youngest sister when I was only five years old”, she added. “But now I see our soldiers planting trees and Germans smiling at me. That comforts my heart.”

ICEJ DONATES ANOTHER LIFESHIELD BOMB-SHELTER FOR SOUTHERN ISRAEL

BY BIRTE SCHOLZ

IN FEBRUARY, the Christian Embassy was able to donate yet another portable bomb-shelter to protect Israeli civilians in southern Israel against rocket attacks from Gaza. The ICEJ, its branches and network of supporters have now placed nearly 40 such life-saving shelters in the western Negev region through Operation Lifeshield. The latest bomb-shelter comes thanks to the generous donation of a German Christian couple along with other donors to ICEJ-Germany, headed by national director Gottfried Bühler. The shelter will be placed at a kindergarten in the city of Netivot, located just 14 kilometers from Gaza. Last year, more than 2,300 missiles and rockets were fired into Israel by terror militias in Gaza.
Don’t just visit the land of the Bible, experience the God of the Bible at the annual Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. Includes a rich 10-day devotional journey through Israel led by Rev. Malcolm Hedding plus 6 nights of anointed worship & teaching in the Judean wilderness and Jerusalem.

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