WORD FROM JERUSALEM

JERUSALEM'S JUBILEE
2017 FEAST OF TABERNACLES

PASTORS AND YOUNG ADULTS
Experience Israel

50th Anniversary of a United Jerusalem
Dear Friends,

We experienced another blessed Feast of Tabernacles this past fall. Every year the Lord shows up and blesses us beyond our expectations! He is faithful to do so, because the Feast of Tabernacles is not the ICEJ’s feast, but it is the Feast of the Lord. He has called us to be faithful stewards to make the Feast a place for the nations where they can meet and encounter God.

The pilgrims came again from more than 80 nations, bringing reports of revival in China and Latin America as well as news of what God is doing in Israel and the Arab world. Besides exuberant worship and powerful prayer sessions during the week, excellent Bible teachings from teachers like David Pawson and Billy Wilson, together with a powerful prophetic word from Malcolm Hedding, were some of the highlights.

If you haven’t had a chance to join us, I want to encourage you to come to Jerusalem in 2017 as we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of a united city of Jerusalem. I highly recommend that you join the US Branch’s tour to Israel for the Feast.

In an effort to introduce as many Christians as possible to Israel, the US Branch is offering many great tours this year. This month’s magazine highlights the annual Feast of Tabernacles tour as well as upcoming pastors and young adult tours. Please pray about joining us and sending your pastor or a young adult on these exceptional tours.

I hope you enjoy reading our new issue of the magazine and are as excited as we are about what God is doing in Israel!

May the Lord bless you richly from Zion,

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ Executive Director
2016 FEAST OF TABERNACLES

JERUSALEM’S JUBILEE FEAST 2017

HELPING YOUNG ISRAELIS

AFRICA OPENS UP TO ISRAEL

PASTORS AND YOUNG ADULTS EXPERIENCE ISRAEL
This year’s Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem was a powerful time as the body of Christ assembled. Following the theme “All the Families of the Earth,” many of the Feast attendees came with their entire families, instead of just in tour groups. The six-day-long celebration resounded with unified voices of prayer and praise from the mouths of young and old, men and women, and in dozens of languages. This prophetic Feast of the Lord was a time of refreshing and renewal for families which gathered in the land of Israel from over 80 nations.

Representatives from every continent had an opportunity to bless the people of Israel during their stay in Jerusalem. Churches from Bolivia brought offerings collected over the entire year to support the Jewish people. A representative from Cameroon, a diverse country in central Africa, presented Holocaust survivors with 70 care packages made in their nation. At the Jerusalem March, pilgrims hugged, blessed, and spoke words of encouragement to local Israelis. The outpouring of compassion and love was endless.

Above all else, these Christian families journeyed to Jerusalem from the four corners of the earth to glorify the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. While showing support and gratitude toward Israel, the message of the annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration remains the same since it began almost 40 years ago: We do this out of our love for the One True God.

As we thank God for last year’s Feast, we invite you to join the Feast of Tabernacles 2017! Sign up now for the US Branch's tour to the Feast at icejusa.org/feast-tour
Representatives from every continent had an opportunity to bless the people of Israel during their stay in Jerusalem.

Christian families journeyed to Jerusalem from the four corners of the earth to glorify the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’” (Genesis 12:1-4).

What does the above passage from Genesis tell us about the Lord?

It captures a key moment in the history of the human race; the beginning of God’s rescue of the human race from itself. The conversation was not two-way; God did all the talking as He is a God who speaks! The universe came into being when God spoke it into being. We can rejoice that our God is a God who talks, who speaks, who communicates with us. Abram was a man who listened, which is the other side of communication. You only hear God if you’re listening.

Another thing this passage tells us is that God has a name. The name given here in Hebrew is the letters יד היל ווא יד, which in English is spelled “Jehovah,” but is often pronounced “Yahweh” (Ya-hway). The significance of that name is this: It distinguishes our God from every other one who ever existed. He has a name, just as our name distinguishes us as unique from everyone else.

God is a commanding God. And, He has a right to be, because He created us. He makes our laws and has a full right to tell us what to do and how to live.

God is a God of history. Only a God who can control history can promise to make a great nation out of someone, give them a great name, and then keep that promise, which He has done! Today, everyone knows the name Israel.

God is a God who blesses people: to do them good, make provision for their needs, protect them when attacked and bless them. He promised to bless Abram and through him, everyone else as well. That is a big promise, and God is a God who blesses people.

But, there is also a downside to it: God is also a God who curses people. Some people think this only applies to the Old Testament, but it carries right through the New Testament, too. Modern man does not like this and wants a God who only blesses. But, He will curse those who disobey Him.

He is a Father of Israel who says, ‘what you do to my children, you do to Me – and I will do to you.’ Cursing is to speak harmfully about people, to damn them for the future. It’s a true fact of history that every nation, every empire, which has risen up against this little land of Israel, has in turn been cursed by God.

God is a very patient God. His covenant with Abram took hundreds of years to work out. In fact, with roughly half the Jewish people still living outside the Land of Israel today, God has a lot of work left to do to bring them back and give them what He promised. But He is patient and will be faithful to complete it. Time is relative to Him, and He is an Eternal God.

Finally, He is a caring God. His concern is for all the people He has made; not just for Abram, but for “All the families of the earth.” His plan involves everyone, but it will reach them through Abraham and his descendants, and those like ourselves who look to him as our Father. God cares about the people He has created, and He wants to bless them too, through Abraham’s family!

Jesus was, is, and always will be, a Jew. My Bible is full of Jewish writing. Everything I value most I owe to the Jewish People. And this applies to every nation of the world; until the nations swallow their pride and bless this nation, Israel, they will not know the truth, nor have salvation.

God chose one nation, not for their sake, but for the sake of everyone else. God made this covenant with Abraham, the benefits of which we all enjoy.

To hear the full message, visit www.icejstore.com
The six-day-long celebration resounded with unified voices of prayer and praise from the mouths of young and old, men and women, and in dozens of languages.

WHERE LOVE CONQUERED DEATH

Garden Tomb Communion Service

The Communion Service at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem is always a memorable time for pilgrims to reflect on the sacrifice made on the Cross. Pastor Wayne Hilsden’s powerful message of hope focused on Romans 6:5: “For if we have been united with [Jesus] in a death like His, we will certainly also be united with Him in a resurrection like His.” Local pastors Oded Shoshani, a Messianic Jew, and Vincent Shamaz, an Arab Christian, personified what the act of communion represents: pointing to Jesus’s power and love, they shared bread and wine with one another in unity and forgiveness.

Feast attendee Berly Kristiansen from Norway shared how deeply impacted she was by the service. “As we were worshipping, I felt God’s presence come over us as if He was kissing His children, because He was so pleased with all of us – from all around the world – gathered together to worship Him!” 😊
FROM EVERY NATION AND EVERY TRIBE
The Parade of Nations at the Pais Arena in Jerusalem

At the Pais Arena in Jerusalem, delegates from every country represented at the Feast of Tabernacles walked across the stage holding their national flag as crowds cheered. Some of the countries were represented, not by a single delegate but, by an entire family in keeping with this year’s theme.

The pilgrims were then welcomed to Jerusalem by Dr. Jürgen Bühler, ICEJ Executive Director. His message focused on the main theme of this year’s Feast: *All the Families of the Earth*. Encouraged by his own personal experience of a miraculous healing, he gave the attendees an opportunity to receive prayer for healing on the opening night and the evenings that followed. Hundreds came forward to pray and felt the tangible presence of God.

“The family relationship within the Body of Christ is important because it is an eternal relationship,” he emphasized. 😊
CHRISTIANS REMEMBER VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST
10th Anniversary of ‘Christian Friends of Yad Vashem’

This year at the Feast of Tabernacles, pilgrims had an opportunity to celebrate a revolutionary and wonderful endeavor which began in Jerusalem in October, 2006. That year the ICEJ was invited to enter into an unprecedented partnership with Yad Vashem, an institution in the capital city of Israel that honors the memory of the Jewish people who went through or perished in the Holocaust. This historic breakthrough in repairing Jewish-Christian relations was the establishment of the Christian Desk at Yad Vashem, a partnership between Yad Vashem and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.

Led by Dr. Susanna Kokkonen, the Christian Desk connects Christians from around the world with Yad Vashem to support the nations in Holocaust commemoration, education, research, documentation, and raising awareness about anti-Semitism.

CELEBRATING SUKKOT AS JEW AND GENTILE
Close to 800 Israeli Guests join the ICEJ Feast of Tabernacles

The ICEJ celebrated the lives of Holocaust survivors from the Haifa Home with a touching performance by Ilana Avital, a popular Israeli singer who invited twelve survivors to sing with her. The song was followed by more musical performances during which many of the Haifa Home residents rose from their seats to dance! The dancing and singing continued throughout the night, especially during songs performed by Vesna Bühler who was accompanied by professional Arab orchestra in her performance of a Jewish prayer from Psalm 147.

One guest in the audience, Rabbi Yitschak Naki, said he enjoyed the celebration immensely and commented, “It is truly beautiful to see so many people who love Israel gathered together here in Jerusalem.”
HONORING AN OUTSTANDING SUPPORTER OF ISRAEL
Dr. George Giacumakis receives the Nehemiah Award

Presented annually at the Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, the ICEJ established the Nehemiah Award to honor outstanding figures for a lifetime of achievements for the sake of Israel and the Jewish people.

This year’s award was presented to Dr. George Giacumakis. ICEJ-USA Director, Susan Michael, recognized Dr. Giacumakis’ lifetime record of excellence in promoting and defending Israel and teaching the Body of Christ the truth about the Bible and the Jewish people. Dr. Giacumakis is Professor of History and Director Emeritus of the California State University Fullerton – Irvine Campus. He is the Founder and Director of the Museum of Biblical and Sacred Writings, with exhibitions in various locations, as well as Director of ‘History on the Move’ study tours to Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. For more than 20 years, Dr. Giacumakis also served as founding Chairman of the Board of the ICEJ and is Chairman of the ICEJ-USA Board until today.

“It has been wonderful to see how the Feast of Tabernacles has grown over the years. I thank the Lord for what he has done through you and ICEJ,” Dr. Giacumakis told the audience.

THE STREETS OF JERUSALEM RESOUND WITH JOY
The annual Jerusalem March

Every year the Jerusalem March is a highlight of the Sukkot holiday, both for the pilgrims who march and the residents of the city who line the streets to observe. The route of this colorful, international parade is through some of Jerusalem’s most popular neighborhoods and fills them with music and laughter. Local children were mesmerized by this outpouring of love and support. They reached out for flags, candy, and little notes of love handed out by marchers — any type of souvenirs — to remind them of the day the whole world came to them.

Mr. and Mrs. Eglin from Norway who marched in the parade for the first time made these remarks, “We have many parades in Norway, but nothing quite like this. The thing that touched us the most was hearing the Israeli people on the sides of the street shouting to us, ‘You are welcome here!’”
“At 4:30 this morning, I was suddenly awakened and experienced the following words flooding my mind and heart. I cannot quite describe it; it was as if I was detached from them and was gazing at them as they rolled by in front of me. Still more amazing was the fact that they were etched in my memory immediately, and I could write them down some hours later word-for-word.”

Rev. Hedding declared them over the assembled delegates at the final evening plenary of the Feast:

“'I say unto you, a great darkness, indeed a thick and heavy darkness, is coming upon the earth ...but, I will give you light, a light that will penetrate the darkness and overcome it. Be not afraid because this will be an hour of testing for many in My Church, and even one of persecution, but be faithful in your sufferings for I have overcome the world. Truly those whom I call to walk this road share in the fellowship of My sufferings. This, My people, is a privilege!

"Moreover, a great light will come from My throne upon Israel. Those who have despised My people will be put to shame, says the Lord. But you will rejoice because you have been faithful to Me for them. Therefore, for you who have borne My name, a great joy will flood your hearts, indeed a joy that will rise up within you like a great tidal wave. It will be your strength, it will give you courage, and it will fill your hearts with peace.

"Above all know this: I am coming quickly, yes I am coming quickly and My reward is with Me. Therefore, hold fast what you have. Moreover, lift up your heads heavenward for I stand at heaven’s door and shortly it will open and I will come forth with great glory and, as My feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, I tell you, My glory will fill the whole earth.

"Go forth then with joy and have in your hearts this blessed hope!’"
“How exciting it is for me to stand here before you,” exclaimed Robert Singer, the CEO of the World Jewish Congress, standing on the podium of the Pais Arena Wednesday evening of the Feast. “You love Israel just as the Jewish people do!” The auditorium erupted with applause.

With a sense of disappointment and grief, Singer brought up the recent UNESCO decision to strip Jerusalem of its Jewish and Christian history: “The place where the First and Second Jewish Temples stood... the place where Jesus was found as a boy sitting in the midst of the teachers... According to the UNESCO decision, the Temple Mount is only and exclusively, and I quote, a Muslim holy site of worship,” he said. “This disgraceful decision, made by an organization supposedly promoting education, science, and culture, was an insult to all educated people, to all Jews, to all Christians.”

Ron Lauder, the President of the World Jewish Congress, unable to attend the event this year, sent a video greeting to the attendees: “My dear Christian friends, over two thousand years strong,” said Ron Lauder. “It’s been three years since I first spoke at your gathering, when we established a strong, unbreakable friendship.” Lauder stressed that there is nothing more important to the World Jewish Congress than the continuous strong bond between Jews and Evangelical Christians.

“Three years ago I made a pledge: just as you stand with us, we will stand with you.” Quoting the Book of Romans in the New Testament, Lauder encouraged the Christian supporters of Israel at the Feast of Tabernacles to trust the promises of God and stand strong against the words of the enemy who tries to undermine the biblical truths about the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem.

To hear the full speeches of Robert Singer and Ron Lauder, together with speeches from Josh Reinstein of the Knesset Christian Allies Caucus and Rev. Malcolm Hedding of the ICEJ, you can purchase a recording of the whole evening from www.icejstore.com.
Next year’s Feast of Tabernacles will be a historic convocation with great prophetic significance. The year of 2017 will mark 50 years since the reunification of Jerusalem. Prior to 1967 Jerusalem was a divided city with the eastern section occupied by the Kingdom of Jordan. Jews who lived in the Old City had been exiled to West Jerusalem and its synagogues were destroyed. But, in June 1967, Israel pre-empted a massive attack by Arab allied forces and, not only miraculously survived as a nation but, for the first time in almost 2000 years, gained control over the most holy sites of Judaism: The Temple Mount and the Old City of Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem was united once again.

In his Olivet discourse, Jesus prophesied over the city of Jerusalem: “And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). Jerusalem was indeed trampled down by the nations for nearly 2000 years. The Roman Empire exiled the Jews in the year 70 AD and the city was subsequently controlled by the Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, Mamelukes, Ottomans, and finally the British. During that same period the Gospel of Jesus Christ spread to all four corners of the world. Indeed, it was, and still is, the times of the Gentiles.

But, June 1967 was the harbinger of a new era. For the first time in 2000 years, Jerusalem was no longer ruled by the Gentiles but by its ancient people, the Jews. 2017 marks 50 years after a divided city became united. It is a Jubilee which roars like a lion that a new season is dawning for Israel and the church.

The anniversary is like a shofar blow calling the church to reach out for possibly one more final wave of world evangelization, and at the same time to stand in friendship and comfort with Israel, united like never before. It is also a declaration to Israel that, unlike the past 2000 years, there is today a growing body of Christ that recognizes the calling of God upon the Jewish people.

You don’t want to miss this once-in-a-lifetime experience to celebrate this special feast in the “City of God” and to experience God talking to us in a unique way.

We look forward to welcoming you in Jerusalem – The City of God – in 2017!

To join the US Branch tour to the Feast, bring your own tour, or register as an individual please call 1-866-393-5890
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ICEJ Brings Young Israelis Encouragement and Safety

By Maxine Carlill

Along Israel’s southern borders with Gaza and Egypt, daily life is regularly interrupted by sirens and alerts, which give only 15 seconds notice of an incoming missile.

The ICEJ staff recently paid a solidarity visit to some of the communities close to the Gaza border to show support and see the fruit of ICEJ donations from the past months.

On the beautiful grounds of a kibbutz near Gaza is a home for girls aged 12-18 who have been rescued from environments of abuse. With dedicated counselors and personalized treatment, they have been given an opportunity to build new friendships. At this caring place many of the girls choose to study for a profession which will enable them to help other young Israelis who may have gone through similar traumas.

Some of us wondered why this facility was built so close to the Gaza border. But, in addition to this region being their home, the experiences of facing threats together and learning how to handle dangerous situations with confidence, actually strengthens the residents in their efforts to overcome other problems.

Thanks to Christian support, the ICEJ sponsored a large dining and living area on the premises where ICEJ staff members found the girls practicing English, playing games, and socializing. At last these troubled girls live in a place which gives them hope for the future.

The ICEJ staff also visited a school for performing arts near Kibbutz Magen by the Gaza Strip. The first of its kind in this southern region of Israel, the school provides local students with educational opportunities similar to Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. The school offers high school students with artistic potential a world-class intensive program in performing arts that would otherwise be unaffordable.

After being given a sobering security update by the kibbutz members, the ICEJ staff members understood the safety concerns of the children who attend the school. Thus, we were delighted to deliver another ICEJ-funded shelter to the school.

The ICEJ is privileged to lend a helping hand and bring encouragement and security to the courageous residents along the dangerous southern border of Israel.

Please help us continue this life-changing work in Israel! Send your gift to ICEJ Aid at www.icejusa.org/aid

To support projects like this one, go to: www.icejusa.org/aid
Africa Opening Up to Israel

New ICEJ-Tanzania branch shows Africa’s heart to bless Israel

By David Parsons, Senior International Spokesman

In late September, Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu stood at the podium of the United Nations and delivered a shocking message: “Israel has a bright future at the UN.” Indeed, the world body has been incessantly condemning Israel for decades, yet he now has good reason to believe things are changing. Netanyahu cited his recent visit to Africa as one example of change, where he was warmly welcomed by numerous national leaders and large crowds of admiring people.

In August, I travelled to the country of Tanzania and saw firsthand the way Africa is now opening up to Israel as never before. I was joined by the Rev. Mosy Madugba, ICEJ’s Nigerian Director and coordinator for all Africa, and together we inaugurated the new ICEJ-Tanzania branch. The official launch came during a nationwide conference on Israel attended by over 2,000 Christians from all across Tanzania as well as six other African countries. These believers were hungry for solid biblical teaching on Israel and the Church, were eager to bless Israel through much sacrificial giving, and were very excited to learn more about modern Israel and its many innovations. Many attendees proudly spoke of how the government of Tanzania is preparing to open a new embassy in Israel in order to improve relations between the two countries. This demonstrates just how ready Africa is to renew and expand ties with the Jewish state.

The launch of the ICEJ’s new branch in Tanzania was spearheaded by evangelist Stanton Newton, ICEJ’s representative there for the past two years. He has spent the past decade educating himself about Israel and the ICEJ, especially about our biblical message and aid projects. Over the last year, Stanton traveled throughout the country telling churches about the upcoming national conference on Israel and urging them to take up offerings for Israel and bring them to the gathering. As a result, almost $9,000 was collected to “bless Israel.” Some of these donations were pledged towards our work to assist Holocaust survivors, while the bulk was designated to assist several families of Ethiopian Jews to make Aliyah to Israel. As the different regions of the country lined up to present their offerings, time after time I knew I was holding the “widow’s mite” in my hand, as the average annual income in Tanzania is about $600. Yet their profession of faith was very strong: If we bless Israel, we will be blessed.

Tanzania is a unique country in Africa as for several decades it was under the influence of communist China. This hindered development in some ways, but also gave the people a collective sense of identity as one nation, so Tanzania has not experienced the same tribal conflicts which have plagued many other countries across the continent. There is also a unique sense of unity even within the Body of Christ in Tanzania, as the leading bishops from the Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, and Pentecostal churches all stood in unison with Israel on the platform at the ICEJ conference.

This unity sent a strong message to their government leaders, who are already moving to strengthen ties with Israel. The president himself will travel to Israel to open the new embassy in November. Meanwhile, a group of
Christian business leaders, headed by the former foreign minister, has already acquired a 100-acre plot of land to build a model Israeli farm which will showcase all the agricultural innovations available from the Jewish state. They expect government officials and farmers from all across Africa to visit the model farm in the coming years.

In his UN address, Netanyahu highlighted Israel’s agricultural innovations as one of the reasons African leaders are now looking to the Jewish state for answers on how to feed and defend their people. He also cited Africa’s growing interest in Israel’s technological advances and its expertise in counter-terrorism and cyber-security. While in New York, he also held a summit with leaders from 15 African nations to discuss opportunities for increased cooperation.

Netanyahu’s remarks at the UN came on the heels of his historic visit to four East African nations this past summer to mark the 40th anniversary of the famous Entebbe raid in Uganda in which Yoni, his older brother, died. Heads of state from several other nations in the region also flocked to the ceremonies and engaged with the large Israeli delegation, and Israeli officials have also entered negotiations with the main West African economic union to work out a favorable trade deal between them.

So the Israeli government has become very serious about restoring its historic ties with Africa, which were originally forged by Golda Meir in the 1950s and 60s. Although these ties were severed due to heavy Arab pressure following the 1967 Six Day War, African leaders now realize that Israel has the innovations and technology their nations need to prosper and secure their own futures.

No doubt, the International Christian Embassy has been at the forefront of this recent development. Israeli leaders first saw the potential of renewed ties with Africa in 2011 when the ICEJ branch in Nigeria successfully lobbied their president to not recognize a unilateral Palestinian state in the UN Security Council, thereby blocking that diplomatic initiative. Since then, we have met with leaders of numerous African nations, including some with Muslim majorities, who have all asked us to take back messages to Jerusalem of their interest in restoring relations with Israel. Indeed, it is a day of great favor on Zion, and Africa’s time to be blessed!
The Ancient Cities of Turkey and the Modern World

ICEJ representative, Serguei Popov, who is coordinating the work of the ICEJ in Eastern Europe and former CIS nations, was instrumental in establishing the ICEJ branch in Turkey. In the article below Popov shares important insight into how the history of Turkey remains relevant to the global Church today.

By Serguei Popov

The Republic of Turkey is a land of rich beauty and ancient empires with shores on the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Sea of Marmara. People come from around the world to enjoy the beauty and history of this land to enjoy the beauty and history of this land in spite of the terrorism and conflicts which plague this region. Few, however, seem to remember this ancient land which, is currently 99% Muslim but, was once the cradle of Christianity.

The Apostle Paul spent most of his time in this area during his first, second, and third missionary journeys in the First Century AD. Paul brought the gospel of Jesus Christ and established many churches which are later mentioned in the Book of Revelation: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. It was here, in the ancient city of Antioch of Pisidia, that the term “Christian” was first used to describe followers of Christ (Acts 11:26).

Over time Christianity spread throughout the provinces and the teachings of Christ were incorporated into daily life, community, and culture. Little physical evidence remains of the early church, however, since the Christians tended to meet in private homes. It was not until the 4th century AD, when the Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, that churches came into public view.

It was here, in Turkey, where ecumenical councils developed the basic tenets of Christianity and laid the moral and cultural values which became the foundation of the Judeo-Christian faith of today. This cradle of Christian civilization, however, was rocked with the coming of Islam, beginning in the 7th Century AD. For 700 years the Byzantine Empire, originally mostly Christian, resisted the onslaught of Islam. But, on May 29, 1453 Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks.

Under the rule of the Ottomans, Islam became the official religion. Churches and synagogues were destroyed or converted to Mosques. The magnificent St. Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople was taken by the Muslims and turned into the Hagia Sophia Mosque. Policies were soon established to encourage, or force, conversions of Christians to Islam. As a result within the population of more than 70 million in Turkey, less than 1% profess themselves to be Christians.

Another rapidly-disappearing people group in Turkey is the Jews. There are currently only approximately 20,000 Jews in Turkey, mainly in the capital city of Istanbul, who must keep a low profile for fear of hostility from Muslim neighbors. In November 2007 one Imam in Istanbul posted a verse from the Koran on the door of his mosque which read “friendship with Jews and Christians is forbidden.”

Today terrorism and radical Islam have taken over most of the Middle East and spread further into Europe. What happened? How is it that the world has become distracted from the teachings of Christ? Why is it that the religion of peace and love has been effectively swept away? The Bible teaches us
that the way to distraction starts with a cooling down of the hearts and spiritual lives of Christians, weakening churches and their impact on the culture.

The fall of Christianity in Turkey began much earlier than the Ottoman Turkish invasion. Jesus commended the great church in Ephesus for testing those who claimed to be apostles but were not. Although he applauded them for enduring persecution, nevertheless, he confronted them for forsaking their first love. They got caught up in church administration and neglected the purpose of the church: To glorify God through the work of Christ.

To the church of Pergamum, Jesus pointed out the false teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans which they had allowed within the church. Jesus accused the church at Thyatira of tolerating the teachings of Jezebel, who was misleading people into sexual immorality and consuming food sacrificed to idols. He accused the church in Sardis of being a dead church and warned them to “wake up.” Finally, the church in Laodicea was considered lukewarm, because they became too comfortable in their wealth.

Do these messages to churches nearly 2,000 years ago have any relevance to today? Absolutely! Persecution is not the worst thing to happen to believers. The true danger lies in compromising church doctrine by mixing with secular and pagan ideas. The churches in Philadelphia and Smyrna resisted pressures from the world and they endured the persecution that came their way. The other five churches turned from a pure love of Christ and allowed sensuality, false teaching, and worldly ideas to distract them from the pure gospel.

The remnant of Christians still existing in Turkey today can be attributed to the values lived, and steadfastly adhered to, long ago by the churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna. Jesus’ words were not just for the seven churches from 2,000 years ago. He speaks to every church, in every culture, in every period of time in the past, present, and future. His message is of the victory we achieve by endurance, commitment to truth, boldness, and unyielding adherence to the unmodified teachings of Christ.

The lessons from the seven churches in the Book of Revelation are relevant today. Many have forgotten their first love and focused on church teachings polluted by secular inclusiveness, ignoring God’s call to holiness. Is this what we expect to happen to the Christian churches: to fade into dust leaving only a remnant, like in Turkey?

It is time for all of us to listen to what Jesus said to the church at Sardis: “Wake Up!” 🙏
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Photo: Michael Hines, ICEJ Outreach Director teaching pastors in April 2016

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Contact ICEJ USA Young Adults Coordinator, Peter Ecenroad at peter.ecenroad@icejusa.org
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YOUR ISRAEL ANSWER:
WHY IS THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT REACHING OUT TO AFRICAN NATIONS?

By Susan Michael

Prime Minister Netanyahu is establishing diplomatic ties with African nations beginning with visits he conducted in the Summer of 2016 to Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and Ethiopia. Before leaving for the historic trip he said, “The African continent constitutes vast potential for Israel in very many areas. Many countries are seeking to open their gates to Israel, and we will realize this desire for their benefit and for the benefit of the state of Israel.”

His multi-pronged goal included increasing economic ties and joint cooperation with the World Bank to expand Africa’s development projects. This would effectively enhance decades of cooperation between Israel and Africa which began in the 1950s.

Examples abound: Netafim, the world’s pioneer in drip irrigation technology has produced tea in Tanzania, drip irrigation for South African crops, and drip irrigation for Senegal’s sugar cane. Netafim operates in 150 countries and employs 3,000 workers. Israel’s most famous outreach to the people of Africa occurred in the 1990’s when they airlifted thousands of Ethiopian Jews to their homeland in Israel, the only nation in the world to bring Africans to freedom, not to slavery.

By 2010 Mashav, Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation, had trained a quarter of a million mostly African students to help their nations in education, health, science, and agriculture. Created in 1955 by Israel’s then-Foreign Minister, Golda Meir, Mashav’s mission is “to empower those living in poverty to improve their own lives.” In 1958 Meir visited Africa enacting an era of cooperation between Israel and the African continent.

While in Africa PM Netanyahu met with Ugandan President Museveni where they held a ceremony opening the first Emergency Trauma Unit at Kampala’s Mulago Hospital. In addition four Mashav centers were inaugurated in four nations. In Rwanda President Clark welcomed Netanyahu saying, “Israel was seen as a small country in a very hostile neighborhood; a country with very few resources but which had recovered from its genocide very quickly and very impressively.” Clark continued, “So Israel was an obvious place for Rwanda to look to for inspiration.”

One of Israel’s most prominent cultural, religious, and policy values is “to repair the world.” In Africa and elsewhere, they are repairing the world through Food Security, Agriculture, Education, Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment, Medicine, Public Health, Community Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Visit us at www.IsraelAnswers.com and get your questions answered!
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AMBASSADORIAL PARTNER
Partnership in ministry is a gift God gives to strengthen and undergird His work. Become an Ambassadorial Partner with the ICEJ with support at a giving level of at least $100 a month. Together, we will defend and support Israel and comfort His people. In return we would like to encourage you with the following ICEJ resources:

• A beautiful partnership certificate
• Receive the Word from Jerusalem magazine
• Online access to free teaching from the ICEJ’s annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem
• A special year-end gift of appreciation

Join the growing number of Christians worldwide who are partnering with the ICEJ to help Israelis in need and who understand the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of the Jews to the land of their forefathers.

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• A special year-end gift of appreciation

Be a part of that future generation spoken of in Psalm 102, and know that you are partnering with the Lord in His work to restore Zion, for the set time has come!

Send in your commitment today to icejusa@icejusa.org or go to www.icejusa.org/partner or call us at (615) 895-9830. You will receive a beautiful partnership certificate.

JOIN THE GROWING NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS WHO ARE PARTNERING WITH THE ICEJ TO HELP ISRAELIS IN NEED AND WHO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MODERN INGATHERING OF THE JEWS TO THE LAND OF THEIR FOREFATHERS.
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Young Adult Tours (18 - 30 year olds)
Israel Impact Tour • June 19 – July 01, 2017
Arise Summer Tour • July 11– July 21, 2017

Feast of Tabernacles Tour
October 4 – October 15, 2017

For more information please contact: (866) 393-5890 or email us at tours@icejusa.org