REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST
FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear Friends,

In Revelation 21:5, God Himself speaks to John the seer: “Behold, I am making all things new!” It is a declaration of newness, change, and transformation, which will characterize the “end of history” and the arrival of the New Jerusalem. But it also characterizes what He is doing in His kingdom today.

God appears in many places in His Word as a God who is doing a new thing (Isaiah 42:9; 43:19). God is encouraging us to embrace the new thing He is doing, even while holding fast to the ancient and saving faith of our fathers. It is in this paradox that we are living even today. Coronavirus is forcing us all to think outside of the box and to embrace the many new ways God is leading us. And as we do this, we will experience His never-changing goodness and holiness—even here in Jerusalem.

We saw this take place at this year’s Envision conference. Threatened by cancellation due to COVID-19, it became our biggest pastors and leaders conference ever. Close to 700 participants from 50 nations joined us as we came live from Jerusalem and other locations across Israel, with more seminars and other content than ever before. The messages from Envision were powerful and all had the same common denominator: God is in control—especially in these drastically changing times.

We are so grateful for the ways our international branches have risen to the challenge of these unique days. For example, we are very grateful for the US Branch’s commitment of placing ten bomb shelters in the vulnerable communities of southern Israel. This magazine reports on two of those shelters and the special young man who funded them.

Also, I am blessed to share with you that our Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa is continuing to expand. A new building is on the verge of being completed to further increase the number of people we care for at the assisted-living home.

Please keep these projects in your prayers, as well as our upcoming Passover distribution to needy Israeli families.

Finally, I want to thank you for standing with us in these critical times and for helping us so that we can bless Israel today more than ever. I pray that you also will experience a new and fresh touch from God in these difficult days.

May the Lord bless you richly out of Zion!

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
President
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

COVER PHOTO: Shalom S. (96), a Survivor of Auschwitz, lit the memorial flame on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. (Photo by Joe Luciano)

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THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH

LESSONS FROM HABAKKUK FOR OUR STORMY TIMES

BY DR. JÜRGEN BÜHLER • ICEJ PRESIDENT
We live in truly challenging times. The year 2021 started out with more worrisome news: new mutations of COVID-19, talk of businesses collapsing, and disturbing scenes from the capitol building of the United States. The global pandemic has impacted our economies and the way we worship and fellowship as believers. Around the world, a post-modern “cancel culture” threatens to erase everything that defines our traditional Judeo-Christian values.

Their questions echo the cries of a certain prophet, Habakkuk. That’s why, in light of the times we live in, the book of Habakkuk holds more relevance for me today than ever before. Habakkuk lived in a time when he did not understand the world anymore—and more importantly, he did not understand God.

Unlike other prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible, Habakkuk did not receive a message directed to Israel. Rather, the book communicates the personal dialogue between a troubled man of God and His Creator.

HABAKKUK’S CRISIS
From the very beginning, Habakkuk voices his complaint to God: “How long must I call for help but You do not listen!” (Habakkuk 1:2–4 NIV). The prophet comes straight to the point: Lord, my prayers are not answered! He also feels God is looking on as injustice spreads and strife and conflicts abound. He sees the people of God and the law being paralyzed (v. 4) and losing their impact in the Land. Instead of righteousness, he sees injustice and violence taking over.

GOD’S FIRST RESPONSE
God’s response (1:5–11) was not what Habakkuk expected. God instructed him to observe what was going to happen, not only in Israel but among the nations: He will raise the Babylonians, “that ruthless and impetuous people” (1:6 NIV). They will come to destroy and to take captives wherever they go. In other words, God told him: “You think it is bad now? Just wait. It is going to get even worse—and I am amid it all.”

In fact, God told Habakkuk He was doing something in their days that they would not believe, even if they were told (Habakkuk 1:5).

THE MAN OF GOD
Consider who Habakkuk was. He was not your average Sunday churchgoer who once a week bothered to go to the church to fulfill his religious duties. He was not a complainer, upset that his prayers were not instantly answered. He was one of the great men of God from ancient times, one of the few persons whose writings ended up in the Bible. His declaration that “the righteous shall live by his faith” (2:4 ESV) is one of the most quoted Old Testament verses in the New Testament. A compatriot of Jeremiah, he was a man of prayer and heard the voice of God like few did in his generation.

However, it was this unique man of God who saw his prayers going unanswered and said, “How long shall I cry?” (1:2 NKJV). After possibly many years of unanswered prayer for revival in Israel, his lament came from a place of despair, a situation not unlike today; many men and women of God have prayed for decades for another revival.

God’s response to the prophet is even more puzzling: “You would not believe it if I told you!”

Many people question the role of prophets today, particularly after the recent US election when some prophetic voices foresaw Trump winning a second term. Like Habakkuk, they most likely would not have believed such a dramatic turn would happen to their beloved nation. It is easy to judge them in hindsight. But I know many of them personally, and they hoped most of all for revival in the United States, just as Habakkuk prayed for revival for his nation. They hoped Donald Trump would continue for another term to strengthen Israel and Christian values in America and in other nations.

HABAKKUK’S THIRD RESPONSE
Yet after God’s reply, Habakkuk was even more perturbed. The pagan Babylonians would be allowed to judge the people of God?
This was highly upsetting for him. “Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?” he asked (1:13 NIV).

But then Habakkuk made a game-changing decision—both for himself and for the outlook and tone of his entire message.

**THE WATCHTOWER**

At that moment, Habakkuk recognized that he desperately needed to hear from God. He understood that old paradigms and concepts would no longer work. The focus now shifted from asking God to hearing from Him.

**THE LIGHTHOUSE**

As Habakkuk listened, God spoke to him! God’s new revelation changed the prophet’s perspective. God did not change His purposes, but He allowed the prophet to see the world in a new light—through the eyes of faith.

Instead of praying what he always prayed, Habakkuk went to his watchtower to receive the divine insight for his time. We need to realize that many of the changes of 2020 are irreversible. What worked in years past might not work today or even tomorrow. God is calling us to go up to our personal watchtower to pray and seek Him as never before. We need to hear the new thing God is doing.

**THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL LIVE BY FAITH**

At the same time, God affirmed to Habakkuk His immovable purposes: “For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.... but the righteous shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:3–4 ESV).

Shakings would surely come, God said, yet the righteous shall live by faith! The most-needed quality to strive for in these troubling times is faith. Do not allow the confusion and challenges of our time to rob your faith. Despite all the chaos around us, God is seated on His throne (Isaiah 6:1).

Or as Daniel declared in faith—when confronted with death, and when all the wise men and magicians of Babylon were at the end of their wisdom—“But there is a God in heaven!” (Daniel 2:28). Amid confusion, economic hardship, and all our unanswered questions, it is our faith in Jesus Christ that will carry us through. The righteous shall live by faith!

God still speaks today, but maybe we need to reorient our hearts, like Habakkuk, to hear the new thing He is doing in the world today. We all need to remember that the Bible is full of passages about difficult times that will come to the world. Lawlessness will increase. He will judge the world through earthquakes, wars, and even pestilences. And yes, eventually, there will be a globally orchestrated war on the saints. I do not know what lies ahead, but could it be that we are entering into a new season when things will become even more difficult for the Western church? Yet, as we draw close to Him and seek His face, God promises that He will draw near to us and will answer our plea!

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As He saw it. The Lord told Habakkuk to write down plainly what He was about to share with him so that others could read it (2:2). That means God gave him not just an answer for his own questions, but what he heard would also help others down through time.

Habakkuk’s watchtower of prayer turned into a lighthouse of guidance for others. God used him in turbulent times to be like the sons of Issachar (1 Chronicles 12:32). This unique tribe understood the times and the seasons they lived in and also knew what they ought to do. The result was the people were at their command. God is looking for these lighthouse people today—people who can give hope and direction in these stormy times.

**HABAKKUK’S NEWFOUND FAITH**

The prophet Habakkuk’s first reaction was to embrace God’s will: “I heard the report” (3:2 ESV). He did not like it and was filled with fear and trembling (3:2; 16), but he could see that God was at work. He saw pestilence and pandemics “at God’s heels” (3:5 ESV), and high places were shaken as the Lord came to visit the earth. But Habakkuk understood that He came not to destroy His people, but He was coming on a chariot of salvation (3:8) and that...
God “went out for the salvation of His people, for the salvation of your anointed” (3:13 ESV).

This should make us consider that the greatest revivals of recent decades have not taken place in the Western democratic, free-market countries. Instead, they have been in developing nations still fighting poverty like Latin America and Africa and in places like China and Iran, and even more recently, in the turbulent Arab world.

Recently, in one of our weekly Global Prayer Gatherings, we heard an amazing testimony from our branch director in the Philippines, Pastor Stephen Mirpuri. Through November and December last year, we prayed for his region after it was horribly struck by a typhoon. Entire villages were completely submerged in water. Many people lost everything. Yet he reported how revival broke out in this hard-hit region, and over 3,000 people accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior in his church alone.

God indeed works in mysterious ways. But He does work! This realization caused Habakkuk to receive divine faith amid challenging times. His hunger for revival in Israel was not quenched but strengthened: “O LORD, I have heard the report of You, and Your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2 ESV).

Perhaps the greatest time for the church in the West is ahead. God’s work is not dependent on any earthly government. Though facing a pandemic and great political upheaval, let us make Habakkuk’s prayer our prayer: Lord, revive Your work and in wrath, remember mercy!

Habakkuk’s attitude had changed—so much so that he was able to make one of the most profound statements of faith in the Bible: “Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:17–18 ESV).

His faith and his joy were independent of the outward circumstances because he saw the Lord was in control. Don’t despair of your own disappointment or lack of understanding or even wavering faith. Remember: even a great man of God like Habakkuk struggled with the happenings of his day. These words by a struggling prophet invite us to plead our case before the Lord, and He will indeed answer!

Finally, Habakkuk concludes, “GOD, the Lord, is my strength; He makes my feet like the deer’s; He makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments” (Habakkuk 3:19 ESV).

The chaos and shakings became the territory of triumph for Habakkuk. God strengthened Habakkuk with His strength and gave him “feet like deer” treading on “high places.”

This verse reminds me of a documentary on mountain goats. They are able to navigate the highest and seemingly impossible terrain of the rocky mountains with uttermost ease. God promises us a supernatural ability to navigate the impossible too. Whether it’s the new realities of our COVID-19 world, the coming economic hardships, or a new government not to our liking, God will give us not only His strategies but also His divine empowerment.
On January 27, the world marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day—held each year on the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in 1945. One of the best ways to honor the six million victims of the Nazi genocide against the Jewish people is to care for those who survived, which is what the ICEJ does at our Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa.

The ICEJ has a team of dedicated Christian volunteers serving the elderly residents living in our Haifa Home. This time of the coronavirus pandemic has been especially difficult for our aging residents. As Israel has experienced three long lockdown periods, the isolation and lack of freedom to meet with family, friends, and each other have been the most challenging aspects of the past year. This has impacted many both mentally and physically. But renewed hope rolled in as 2021 began!

NEW HOPE

Israelis are slowly coming out of another lockdown, and there are glimmers of hope for protecting those in high-risk groups like the elderly, thanks to a fast-paced vaccination drive now underway. For residents in the Haifa Home, the idea of life returning to normal is certainly a comforting thought. Most of our residents have received both of their vaccination shots. And during February, we hope to reopen the community dining hall, so the Survivors can eat together, socialize, and feel alive again!

CELEBRATING THE MANY YEARS

Meanwhile, birthdays do not go unobserved! Yaakov, originally from Poland, has been living at the Home since 2012 and just celebrated his 97th birthday! Although his birthday party was “corona lockdown” style, there was good reason to celebrate. In the past three years, Yaakov has had a live-in caregiver who takes great care of him. He still walks every day and is grateful for the life he has at our assisted-living facility. He once said: “It was a good idea to make Aliyah and come to Israel in 1948, but it was the best decision to move to the Haifa Home. It’s like a family here!”

SNIPPET OF A CONVERSATION

Many other residents share that feeling of being among “family.” One ICEJ volunteer, Kerstin, cleans their apartments, accompanies residents on their visits to the doctor and dentist, and helps wherever needed. She recalled a recent conversation with Judith on a trip to the doctor. Judith is a 92-year-old Survivor from Auschwitz, and here is a snippet of their conversation:

Kerstin: Judith, you are looking so beautiful again today. I especially like your scarf.

Judith: Really, do you know how old that scarf already is? For sure 20 or 30 years!

Kerstin: Wow, Judith, then is that scarf even older than I am?

Judith: It was given as a present from my friend. We were the same age, but she passed away already. All my friends have died. I am the only one remaining, but I am not alone. I have you, and you are always there whenever I need you.

MANIA’S POEM

So many of these tender interactions are experienced daily at the Haifa Home. Mania is an 87-year-old Survivor from Bessarabia, who became an artist and writer. Although this time of coronavirus has been extremely difficult for her, she tries to keep herself busy by being creative. “We need to create and keep our minds occupied and not sit passively behind a TV, which only depresses us,” she tells the others. An avid painter, she has now taught herself to paint on the computer. Every day, she...
We are pleased to update you that the latest expansion of the ICEJ’s Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors is nearing completion. Despite the third coronavirus lockdown in Israel over recent months, work on this new phase has steadily moved forward, and we are now in the final stages of adding the finishing touches to the building. Six housing units have been renovated. Each is equipped with a kitchenette, toilet, shower, and an extra room should the resident require 24/7 caregiver assistance. As we wait for a final permit from the municipality to install an elevator, we are starting the process of selecting possible new residents who will benefit greatly from this wonderful new facility.

The ICEJ Haifa Home now has two positions open for Christian volunteers. This may be your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to serve Holocaust Survivors! We are looking for a physiotherapist and a nurse with a focus on geriatrics to join our team in June 2021. Only those with qualifications and experience in these fields should apply.

Other Requirements:
- Language skills in English and either German, Russian, or Hebrew is helpful.
- Compassion and patience for the elderly.
- Flexibility to work with team and in a foreign culture.
- One- to two-year commitment.

The ICEJ Offers:
- Accommodation in an ICEJ rented apartment in Haifa
- Three meals per day
- An Israeli volunteer visa
- The privilege of serving Holocaust Survivors.

If you fit these criteria, please send your resume and a cover letter to: yudit.setz@icej.org

By the Numbers:
- 179,600 living Holocaust Survivors in Israel.
- 5,300 were infected with coronavirus and 900 have died.
- 17,000 Holocaust Survivors died in 2020 (10%).
- 83% are between 75 and 89 years old.
- 17% are older than 90 years.
- 850 are more than 100 years old.

[Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, December 2020]
The journey from slavery to freedom is commemorated each year during Passover, or Pesach. This is the most important festival on the Jewish calendar. Usually, families and friends gather on the eve of the holiday to enjoy a special Seder meal together while recounting the story of how Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Each year the ICEJ receives many requests to help disadvantaged Jewish families celebrate this important festival. This year, as the harsh economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic linger, the need is greater than ever. The pandemic has pushed thousands of Israeli families into hardship and poverty. According to the latest National Insurance Institute report, because of the coronavirus crisis, the standard of living in Israel saw its largest drop in 20 years! Suddenly, thousands of working-class families have seen jobs disappear or salaries cut, while young and single-parent families are also struggling to stay afloat. According to the latest grim figures, 3 in 10 Israelis live in poverty, and 20 percent of the population is unemployed. As a result, social workers have seen a 50 percent increase in requests for assistance.

Preparations are already underway for this year’s Passover celebration, which begins on the evening of March 27. Working together with the social workers in cities and towns across Israel, the ICEJ will be delivering gift baskets that include groceries, food vouchers, and kitchen items so that families have all they need to enjoy the Passover Seder meal.

Jannie Tolhoek, our Passover distribution coordinator, received the following feedback when delivering holiday gift baskets last year:

“Your gift is something so big to me. . . . Last week I went to the supermarket, and there were great discounts, but I had to walk out again because I could not afford it. Your assistance will help me to buy things for the Pesach holiday, and I am deeply grateful for all those who gave.”

This also came from a social worker in Ashdod:

“Thank you so much for this wonderful help! It means a lot to all the families and will give them a huge smile on their face and help them to celebrate Pesach with joy and dignity.”

In addition to the gift packages, the ICEJ plans to fund several community Seder meals, should government health rules allow for large gatherings.

We invite you to share in this celebratory festival by providing a gift basket ($150) for a needy Jewish family. Please consider helping those in need to preserve this beautiful tradition and remember their deliverance from Egypt.

Donate at: www.icejusa.org/passover
A CALL OF HOPE
BY LAURINA DRIESSE

It can be so deflating when one unexpectedly loses their job. Unfortunately, this has happened to tens of thousands of Israelis due to the coronavirus pandemic.

In fact, one million Israelis are looking for work at present. Over 600,000 were placed on unpaid leave and only now are realizing they will not be able to go back to their previous jobs. While the government is paying partial unemployment benefits, these are set to end by June this year. Not knowing where to turn next, many are seeking out job counselors.

Thankfully, some measure of hope is just a phone call away! Working together with an Israeli partner, the ICEJ has pitched in to help with the unemployment crisis by sponsoring a helpline call center. The center provides free counseling and support to callers from all sectors of Israeli society.

Each person who courageously calls the helpline receives personalized support, as well as practical tools and guidance from trained volunteers. For example, callers receive assistance in writing a resume, preparing for job interviews, defining vocational goals, and setting tangible employment goals. Callers also receive information on their rights and how to cope with loss of income—plus, they are referred to additional resources and services.

Especially hard hit are young people, women, and immigrants. Lital, a mentor for new immigrants, says: “We know that the crisis will get much worse before it gets better. It is especially complicated for immigrants who lack cultural understanding and generally have no supportive family network.”

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the call center received 100 calls per month, a figure that jumped close to 1,000 callers per month due to the crisis. Many need and receive longer-term help. One caller remarked: “My coach was very professional and courteous. She gave me confidence; she gave me hope on difficult days and helped me remain focused while looking for a job. I appreciate all the knowledge, the positive attitude, the dedicated and professional service, the care, and the way I was treated.” Through your generous donations, the ICEJ can continue to assist urgent needs arising from the coronavirus crisis, such as this call center.

Please give today at: www.icejusa.org/aid

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS
BY LAURINA DRIESSE

During the coronavirus crisis, people around the world have been told to “stay at home.” But for many Israeli families living on the edge of poverty, being stuck in a house in desperate need of repairs can be extremely challenging.

ICEJ’s Vice President of Aid and Aliyah Nicole Yoder saw this need firsthand after visiting the homes of several Israeli families living in dire conditions. Working together with our Israeli partners, we have responded by sponsoring home repairs for families all across Israel.

“When we visited some of the homes with the professional team carrying out the work, it was heartbreaking to see the extent of the repairs needed in some homes,” said Nicole. “Yet we were inspired to see how the repair team, with great compassion, arrived at homes [that] needed them most and quickly ensured that all was put right again.”

Through this home repair project, dignity as well as hot water was restored to a Holocaust Survivor who had a broken water heater and thus had no hot water for a shower. His caregiver was washing him using wet wipes until help arrived.

A similar call came from a single Ethiopian mother of four children who is a victim of domestic abuse. Her hot water heater was also broken, but thankfully, she received a new replacement.

Meanwhile, a poverty-stricken woman in Ashkelon was washing up outside with a garden hose for six weeks, as she had no running water in her home. She had a severe leak in her bathroom, and a plumber charged her over $500 for a repair that did not work—and then he disappeared. So she was without water as well as the money to fix it. But through this initiative, water was finally restored to her home.

We also were able to help a distraught family who fell victim to a fire that engulfed their home, killing the mother and leaving the husband with their 13-year-old daughter. The repair team restored and painted the damaged walls, fixed the front door lock, and repaired the faulty electric wires.

While the extent of repairs may differ from house to house, the average cost of repairs per home is approximately $1,500. The ICEJ supported renovations in 28 homes during 2020 and is continuing to extend this support into 2021. Please consider being a part of creating a better living space for desperate Israelis stuck at home.

Please give today at: www.icejusa.org/aid
There is much reason to celebrate! Twenty-five years ago, the ICEJ’s Homecare program for Russian Jewish immigrants was launched when nurse Corrie van Maanen joined the staff. Homecare is still going strong as many elderly and disabled Israelis receive weekly visits, nursing care, and a dose of encouragement from Corrie and her team. Your faithful support throughout the years has made this possible.

For the past 18 years, Homecare has built a precious relationship with a Jewish family whose daughter is dependent on full-time care. The parents suffered during World War II and have cared for their disabled daughter since coming to Israel, but both are now 80 years old. Corrie has respectfully come alongside this family over the years to help care for the daughter in practical, loving ways. The mother says the weekly nursing visits are so uplifting. At the end of one recent visit, she sighed: “Oy, if I didn’t have you!”

Another lady has known Corrie for 25 years, ever since she made Aliyah from Ukraine with her husband and two sick and fragile parents in the 1990s. Homecare visited the parents until they passed and then came to care for her husband when he fell ill. She is now a widow and living alone, and the Homecare team recently helped pack and move her to a new apartment. She told Corrie: “I have no words to thank you . . . when my need is biggest, you have always been there for me.”

Homecare also has developed a warm bond with an elderly, blind gentleman in his 90s. On a visit not long ago, he told Corrie: “I look forward to your coming every week because you are willing to listen when I tell you my stories.” After hearing a recent TV broadcast on the Holocaust, he also related that “no television can ever tell or show what I saw as an eyewitness in the darkness of the war.” He often talks about suffering severely during the Shoah, more than 75 years later. Every week Homecare buys him groceries as his pension is small. He is so thankful for the help and to have made it to Israel, saying “it gave me life.”

These are a few examples of the work Homecare does to bring hope and joy to those under their care. For many, Homecare’s visits are the highlight of their week, especially during this time of isolation due to coronavirus. We are here to comfort and serve them.

Please continue the loving services of ICEJ Homecare at: www.icejusa.org/homecare
The ICEJ USA recently provided two bomb shelters to the S’dot Negev Region in Southern Israel. The shelters were donated by Song for Israel and designated specifically for schools. This timely donation was a wonderful gift for two schools in urgent need of shelters according to S’dot Negev Security Chief Rafi Babiyan.

The first shelter was delivered to an elementary school at Moshav Beit HaGadi and the other to a school in the community of Ma’agalim. Both schools are located only a few miles from the Gaza border.

Both schools were considered to be locations at high risk for rocket attacks and thus a priority for placement of shelters, due to their close proximity to developed areas and industrial sites. On July 5, 2020, two rockets sent by Hamas struck close by in a neighboring community to both Beit HaGadi and Ma’agalim.

The shelters, made of concrete and steel for maximum protection, were larger than normal. Dedication plaques were affixed to the outside. Song for Israel President Deby Brown said, “It is with grateful hearts that Song for Israel is able to donate these shelters, saving lives in Israel.”

Brant (31), suffering from brain cancer, donated two bomb shelters.

Children should not have to live in fear. Do you agree with this statement? Brant Peto did—enough to do something unexpected and wonderful! Here is his story.

Last December, Vickie stopped in to let her son, Brant, know that she and her granddaughter were getting ready to leave for the Song for Israel (SFI) Chanukah party. Brant (age 31) had been struggling with brain cancer for over a year, and a caretaker took over for his mother, allowing Vickie to attend the party.

When Vickie returned home, Brant wanted to know more about SFI and what their charity was about. She explained that their vision was “to proclaim God’s eternal plan for Israel,” and that one of the things they do is collect funds to provide bomb shelters for schools in Israel.

He asked, “Why would schools need bomb shelters?” She explained that those living near the Gaza border experienced rockets from Gaza regularly, and shelters were needed for the children.

Brant had not realized this danger and said, “Kids should not be living in fear.” Vickie asked Deby Brown, director of Song For Israel, to come and share more about the ICEJ bomb shelter program with Brant.

When Deby went to visit, Brant’s brain cancer had progressed to the point he was paralyzed. She showed him pictures of the schools where SFI had already provided shelters and explained the need for more. He was very excited to learn about the shelters and wanted to help.

Brant was an entrepreneurial genius and had started several successful companies at a young age. During the visit, Brant indicated his desire to donate not one but two bomb shelters for two different elementary schools.

The shelters were placed at Beit HaGadi School and Ma’agalim School (see article in sidebar) in partnership with the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. Brant passed away the week that the shelters were installed, but his gift will continue to save lives in Israel.

Song for Israel participants honored Brant with a beautiful memorial garden. A few weeks later, a surprise donation provided a beautiful plaque in the garden.

More bomb shelters are needed to save lives in Israel! As Brant said, “Kids should not be living in fear.”
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LIFE, HATRED, AND HOPE WEBINAR SERIES
The Christian Friends of Yad Vashem, in partnership with International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), invites you to join our upcoming and inspiring year-long series entitled “Life, Hatred, and Hope.” Join us for our March webinar:

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24
12:00 PM (ET)

REV. MALCOLM HEDDING
The History of Christian Anti-Semitism

REGISTER NOW FOR THIS INSPIRING WEBINAR
HTTPS://FORMS.YADVASHEM.ORG/COURSE-REGISTRATION?ID=1067
In late January, we hosted our annual Envision Conference for pastors and ministry leaders, which drew nearly 700 participants from more than 50 nations to the four-day online event—making it our largest Envision gathering ever.

With the coronavirus threat still with us, this year’s conference sought to inspire greater leadership within the body of Christ during this ongoing global crisis.

“The COVID-19 pandemic, the disputed American elections, a looming global recession, the erosion of Judeo-Christian values—all of these unsettling developments are causing people to lose the fixed points in their lives,” ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler told the gathering. “As church and community leaders, we are called to be lighthouses in these stormy times.”

This year’s lineup of Envision speakers included Rev. Ingolf Ellßel (Germany), Dr. Billy Wilson (USA), Kay Arthur (USA), Rev. Mats Ola Ishoel (Russia), Evangelist Angus Buchan (South Africa), MP Kenneth Meshoe (South Africa), Rev. Peter Tsukahira (Israel), Susan Michael (USA), author Joel Rosenberg (Israel), and ministry/business consultants Phil Cooke and Stephen Mansfield (USA).

Envision 2021 featured daily live broadcasts from the TBN studios in Jerusalem and other key locations around Israel, more than 30 seminar messages from proven church leaders, plus Q&A sessions and prayer times, which allowed our guest speakers and pastors from around the globe to interact and fellowship together.

The conference ended with a fascinating discussion between four Israeli pastors about their respective views on the end times with a remarkable degree of agreement on keeping our eyes on Jesus and turning to the Word of God to rightly discern our times.

**Envision Highlights (See Pictures Below)**

1. A visit to Ariel to meet with Jewish settler leaders, as well as a Palestinian sheikh who accepts Israel’s rightful place back in the Land

2. A visit to the Jewish Agency for Israel to hear from their chairman, Isaac Herzog, about Christians partnering in the great ingathering of Israel

3. A special wreath-laying ceremony at Yad Vashem to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day

4. A visit to the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya for an informative, wide-ranging discussion with the IDC’s top faculty on Israeli hi-tech, the Abraham Accords, and other topics

5. An inspiring message from ORU President Dr. Billy Wilson on how to walk in godly leadership in these difficult times.

6. A powerful message from Angus Buchan on how hidden sin can hinder Christian leaders in their ministry.
One of the main topics addressed at this year’s Envision conference was the Abraham Accords – Israel’s recent normalization agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Since those accords were concluded last summer, Israel also has signed peace deals with Morocco and Sudan, while Kosovo just became the fifth Muslim-majority nation to recognize Israel in the past six months.

There are numerous signs that this positive momentum between Israel and the Arab world will continue. For instance, more than 50,000 Israelis flocked to the UAE to visit and shop over recent months, despite the corona travel restrictions. Prominent Israelis also are increasingly being interviewed by Arab media outlets, and some are even getting their commentaries published in official Saudi newspapers.

In another telling sign, dozens of Arabs from the surrounding nations took part in an online event on January 27th to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, where they heard a survivor of Auschwitz give her harrowing testimony of being a victim of Josef Mengele’s diabolic medical experiments. The Arab listeners were moved to tears and vowed to bring Holocaust education to schools and societies throughout the Middle East.

During the ICEJ’s recent Envision conference, we heard from Amb. Dan Shaham, who quietly served as Israel’s top envoy in the United Arab Emirates during the lead-up to the Abraham Accords. He described the recent move towards peace between the sons of Abraham as truly “prophetic.”

“After getting to know the Arabs over my two years in Abu Dhabi, I realized there are a lot of commonalities between us,” said Amb. Shaham. “Israelis are warm, open and friendly, and so are they. They want to develop their country and to create a new narrative for the Arab world, which is something we also understood as our role... So it was a meeting of minds between two peoples who were both ready for these changes.”

“There was also a value for the Arabs of just doing the right thing,” he added. “One of my friends told me: ‘We have relations with many Christian countries, why shouldn’t we have relations with the Jewish country.’”

American-Israeli author Joel Rosenberg also shared about his recent ground-breaking visits with Arab rulers who are now befriending Israel.

“Suddenly, we’ve seen these tectonic changes and the big question is: Why?” said Rosenberg. “The Arab leaders I have met are saying the world has changed. They have seen Israel become a military power in this region, but also an economic miracle. And they see Israel as an ally against the growing threat of Iran... They also are telling me they still support the Palestinian cause, but they have become frustrated with the Palestinian leadership for constantly rejecting peace with Israel.”

Meantime, during a visit to the West Bank we also heard from Palestinian sheikh Nasr Abu Khalil Al-Tamimi, who said he not only accepts the Jewish people’s rightful place back in the Land of Israel, but also believes there is room on the Temple Mount for the Jews to rebuild their temple.
On December 22, 2020, Israel’s coalition government with two prime ministers dissolved after the Knesset failed to pass a state budget. The coalition had survived for eight months after a series of postponed deadlines for agreeing on an Israeli budget. However, the final legal deadline to pass a budget expired, and now Israel is headed for its fourth election in two years on March 23, 2021.

From an American perspective, the countless elections, political rivals sharing the office of prime minister, and elected officials surviving their elected term based on the state budget is nothing less than bizarre. This begs the question for many of us on the peripheral: How exactly do Israeli elections work?

Parliamentary Democracy
The state of Israel is a parliamentary democracy, a form of government in which the executive power receives its legitimacy from a democratically elected legislature. Within Israel’s executive branch are a prime minister (the head of government) and a president (the head of state). In addition to a legislative and executive branch, there is a judicial branch, whose powers and responsibilities are conducted independently of the other two branches.

The citizens of Israel make up the electorate, who vote in members of the legislative branch, formally known as the Knesset (Hebrew for “gathering”), every four years. Instead of voting for candidates, the people vote for a party. The resulting 120 seats of the Knesset are assigned by party and proportionate to the number of votes each received.

Forming a Government
Once the parties are elected, the 120 elected officials recommend to Israel’s president the person they desire to be the prime minister to form the Israeli government. It is not the number of votes a party receives that determines which candidate for prime minister gets the first chance at forming a government. Rather, the person with the most recommendations from the 120 elected legislators receives the opportunity. Once the communal recommendation is made, the president asks the choice candidate for prime minister to form the government.

The chosen candidate then has 42 days to form a majority government (which requires a minimum of 61 of the 120 elected candidates). Interestingly, no party has ever received a majority of votes (excluding the Labor Party merger in 1969). Therefore, a coalition of parties has been operating in every Israeli government formed to date.

Maintaining a Government
Coalition governments are fragile and hard to maintain. Before Israel’s last coalition agreement collapsed, the majority government had 73 legislators made up of two-party blocs: the Likud bloc (54 seats split between 5 parties) and the Blue and White bloc (19 seats split between 3 parties). The remaining 47 seats were the “Opposition,” split between 6 parties.

Under the agreement, the current prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was intended to serve for 18 months until September 2021. At that time, Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz was intended to serve as prime minister for 18 months thereafter.

Now that the government has failed to create a state budget, an integral part of sustaining a coalition agreement, the government has collapsed, and new elections are needed to begin the process all over again. The challenge to find a productive, unified leadership will be arduous, and there is no guarantee Netanyahu will remain prime minister. New challengers have emerged that will make this historic fourth election within two years especially interesting.

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ICEJ USA PRESENTS

FERVENT 2021


APRIL 7
4PM-6PM ET

MODERATED BY
PETER ECENROAD
AND JOHN VEDDER

There are discoveries that change us. There are places that connect us. There are people that inspire us.

Gain insights from the Land of Israel, as young adults from across the United States gather online with Israeli tour guide, Beni Friedman and Arise Director, Lily Sironi.

Both located in the heart of Israel, Beni and Lily bring stories of inspiration to tourists and pilgrims each year. Magnificently told, visitors step back in time and experience the unfolding story of the miracle of Israel. Hearing from Beni and Lily is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for audiences from around the world.

As young adults face an ever-changing culture and the attack on Judeo-Christian values at college campuses, Beni and Lily will share ways in which we can confront anti-Semitism and help preserve societies that are free from hatred. FerVent 2021 will encourage young adults to be fervent in their faith as we receive a message of hope from Israel.

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