25 YEARS OF ICEJ HOMECARE

THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL’S REBIRTH
Dear Friends,

Excitement is beginning to build this month in Jerusalem as Israel prepares to celebrate her 70th anniversary. The Hebrew date for the anniversary falls in April this year, but most of our American family will be celebrating on the Gregorian calendar date of May 14. We hope you are planning to join the ICEJ in Washington, DC for our Israel: Seventy and Strong celebration, May 13–15.

The return of the Jewish people to their homeland and the establishment of the State of Israel is a modern-day miracle. It is clearly a fulfilment of Scripture, and proof of the faithfulness of God to His Word and to His people. This is great cause for rejoicing in the Christian church!

Unfortunately, much of the world is still refusing to accept the existence of the Jewish State and is fighting against it—whether politically, ideologically, or militarily. The situation on Israel's northern border is extremely tense, and many are predicting war. In preparation for this possibility, the ICEJ has already placed over 55 portable bomb shelters in Israel but is sensing an urgency to place many more.

On a more positive note, we are proud to be celebrating Corrie van Maanen's 25 years of involvement with ICEJ Homecare. She has been a great blessing to the people she has served on behalf of the ICEJ. Thank you Corrie!

In Christ our Saviour!

Dr Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ President

COVER PHOTO:
Corrie van Maanen with one of the many people she has cared for through ICEJ Homecare.

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RESTORED FOR DESTRUCTION?

Is the “time of Jacob’s trouble” still ahead of us?

“Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” — JEREMIAH 30:7

BY DR JÜRGEN BÜHLER // ICEJ PRESIDENT
A few years ago, I listened to the sermon of a well-known Bible teacher who basically stated: “The Jewish people did not learn the lesson of the Holocaust, so they need to go through more suffering that will make the Holocaust look small in comparison.” A similar thought we frequently hear is: “Two-thirds of the Jews will die in the Great Tribulation.” In other words, the worst chapter in Jewish history is still ahead of us. Or to put it more bluntly, God is returning the Jewish people back to their homeland of Israel in order to kill two-thirds of them in a massive conflagration. These views are usually linked to ominous quotes from the Old Testament prophets that seem to underline their point. One such passage is the above verse from Jeremiah, which speaks about the “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” Other passages used to bolster this teaching are Zechariah 13:8–9 and Ezekiel 5, which both speak about a time when two-thirds of those in the Land will be wiped out.

The Prophetic Context
I personally have strong reservations with subscribing to this kind of interpretation. I believe it takes these passages out of context and, even more importantly, misrepresents the character of God and His present purposes for Israel. At the same time, Scripture indicates that “the time of Jacob’s trouble” and the time when two-thirds of Israel are to be cut off refers to two different events in Jewish history. Allow me to explain.

A. Jeremiah and Jacob’s Trouble
The prophet Jeremiah introduces a great succession of passages in Jeremiah 30–33 that foresee the restoration of Israel, culminating in a “new covenant” of changed hearts and the rule of the “the Righteous Branch.” God makes sure that these prophecies will not be lost for future generations, as He explicitly tells Jeremiah to “write down” the words, because “I will restore the fortunes of My people … and I will bring them back to their land” (30:2–3).

Then God begins to lay out, from verse 4 onward, the sequence for how He is going to accomplish this redemptive work. He first sees a picture of despair and calamity: “Cries of terror and panic!” concluding with the call: “Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble” (30:7). Immediately following these verses, God’s restoration program starts to play out. The Lord announces that change is coming as He breaks off the yoke of oppression (30:8), until Israel will finally serve God and His Messiah. He continues: “Therefore, do not fear, O My servant Jacob ... For behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid” (30:10).

A similar sequence of events is found in the following chapter of Jeremiah 31, where the prophet declares: “Thus says the LORD, ‘The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness’” (31:2). Israel escaped the sword and God saved them. This declaration again is followed by the promise of return from exile: “Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, ... A great throng shall return there” (31:8).

This indicates that the “time of Jacob’s trouble” represents an unprecedented catastrophe (“none is like it”) at a time when Israel is still exiled. Out of this crisis, God is restoring them back to their land.

This is what we see fulfilled in the modern history of Israel. A nation whose people barely escaped complete annihilation in the Holocaust, with six million dead, arose from the ashes of that great tragedy and returned to their homeland to reestablish the nation of Israel, just as the prophet Ezekiel foretold:

Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel”’ (Ezekiel 37:11–12).

The Holocaust indeed was one of the darkest chapters of Jewish history. It was a time of Jacob’s trouble and all historians agree that it was a singularly unique tragedy in human history. Yet out of this season of devastation and hopelessness God saved His people and restored them to their land.
B. Ezekiel and the Scattered Hairs
Ezekiel was the first prophet to foresee the calamity of two-thirds of the people of Israel perishing (Ezekiel 5:1–4). He prophesied these things during the Babylonian Exile and was asked to carry out a strange act to demonstrate what was coming: to take a razor blade and cut off all the hair on his head and beard! Then “you shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, ... then you shall take one-third and strike it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind” (5:2). “This is Jerusalem,” explains the Lord. A two-thirds majority will be wiped out in famine, judgement, and war, while the remaining one-third will not be redeemed but scattered around the world, with harsh persecution following them even in exile (5:2–4).

C. Zechariah and the Shepherd
Zechariah lived in the time when Israel was returning from Babylon. Chapters 12–14 speak about the end-time struggle and restoration of Jerusalem, climaxing in the redemption of Israel as the “spirit of grace and supplication” is being poured out upon them. Yet right in the midst of these passages, the prophet inserts a vision about the Messiah:

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the man who is My Companion,” says the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; Then I will turn My hand against the little ones” (Zechariah 13:7).

Jesus Himself quotes this Scripture (Mark 14:27), referring to its fulfilment in the garden of Gethsemane as His disciples fled, leaving him to suffer alone. In a broader sense, it is also a picture of the entire nation of Israel being scattered three decades after Christ, who is the Great Shepherd who was “struck” and died. In this context, Zechariah foresees tragic times for all of Israel: “And it shall come to pass in all the land, says the LORD, that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it” (Zechariah 13:8).

The accounts of the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius tell us that during the first Jewish uprising, prior to the destruction of the temple, some 1.1 million Jews lost their lives in the Land of Israel. Just a few decades later, during the Bar Kochba revolt, the Roman historian Cassius Dio tallies another 580,000 Jewish casualties, with the surviving remnant being exiled. This would bring the total number of casualties in both revolts over 1.7 million people.

Moreover, the Jewish historian Salo Wittmayer Baron estimated the population of Israel at 2.3 million at the time of the Roman emperor Claudius (AD 41–54). Two-thirds of this number would represent some 1.5 million people. So, there is amazing accord between these secular histories and the words of the Hebrew prophets foretold some 500 years earlier. Both the history books and the prophetic context of the “stricken shepherd” compel us to place these events in the past and not in the future.

Jesus himself foresaw this calamity over Israel when he wept over Jerusalem. “And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations” (Luke 21:24). Zechariah likewise foresees an extended period of judgement for Israel, with two-thirds perishing while the one-third remnant is placed through the “fire” of exile, followed by their eventual redemption.

Thus, there is a common thread that can be followed throughout these prophetic writings in Jeremiah 30–33, Ezekiel 5, and Zechariah 13. The process of Israel’s redemption starts with the rejection and striking of the Shepherd. This is followed by a huge upheaval in the land of Israel where two-thirds are “cut off” with the remaining one-third scattered to all the nations. This exile is accompanied by the refining fire of ongoing persecution and culminates in a final calamity outside the land known as “Jacob’s trouble.” Finally, it ends with a national restoration of Israel that ultimately gives way to her spiritual restoration as well.

This very same sequence also can be found in the great chapters of Ezekiel 36–37, while Psalm 102 also foresees a Holocaust-type ordeal after which God declares that “the time to favor Zion has come!”

The New Paradigm of Favoring Zion
The prophets indicate that once God’s restoration purposes with Israel set in, nothing can stop or interrupt it anymore. Zechariah tells us that Jerusalem will become a “cup of drunkenness” for the world and that the nations will eventually gather against Jerusalem—although the same prophet also declares that it is the nations who will be judged, while Israel is delivered and comes out victorious.

The restoration of Israel represents a paradigm shift in how God is dealing with the Jewish people. The prophet Isaiah starts his restoration-chapters (40–48) with the call to “Comfort My people” and to cry out to her, “that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins” (Isaiah 40:1–2). This expression—“her iniquity is pardoned”—could be better translated from the Hebrew as “her debt has been settled,” or “she has paid for her sin.” Rather than pardon or forgiveness, it reflects the idea that God has completed His season of judgment with Israel and He is no longer dealing with her anymore according to her sins. God is telling the world to cry out to Israel saying that her warfare and time of judgement has ended, and a new season of restoration lies ahead of her!
Likewise, Zechariah declares: “But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,” says the LORD of hosts ... ‘just as I determined to punish you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘And I would not relent, so again in these days I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear’” (Zechariah 8:11–15). This means that God has started an unwavering restoration process representing a radical shift in how He deals with Israel. This does not mean He will never again correct Israel, like a loving father would his son, but it will be done “with measure” (Jeremiah 30:11).

The Way to Redemption
Finally, the teaching that Israel will only receive her Messiah through yet another period of great judgement misrepresents the character of God and even mankind. In general, great human catastrophe does not lead to repentance but rather to the contrary. Pharaoh, after the severest plagues, only further hardened his heart. The book of Revelation parallels this by describing humanity as hopelessly in rebellion against God, even after His great wrath unfolds in the last days: “And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds” (Revelation 16:11).

Catastrophic judgments like that which occurred to Israel in AD 70 were not God’s way to call His people back to Him; rather, they expressed His sense that their measure of sin was full and demanded divine justice. Jesus declared, “your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:38).

Similarly, the great tragedy of the Holocaust left most Jews not seeking God but rather asking, “Where was God?” and many even lost their faith in Him. As one Holocaust survivor once told me, “For me, God died in Auschwitz.” The apostle Paul, on the other hand, declares that “the goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4).

God’s way of redeeming His people is a story of His covenant faithfulness and eternal love restoring them (Jeremiah 31:2). In contrast, the message of God to the nations in our day is not that more judgement is waiting for Israel, but: “Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock’” (Jeremiah 31:10). This can surely include measured discipline by the corrective staff of the Good Shepherd, yet it will lead to green pastures.

This is the call we are committed to at the Christian Embassy: declaring God’s mercy and faithfulness to Israel and to the nations. We are declaring that a new season of restoration has started, and we are challenging the church to join God in this great restoration work with Israel. Our call is to “Comfort My people” and to declare to Israel that a new chapter has started which will lead not to further judgement but to all of Israel being saved! 🕊
THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL’S REBIRTH

The modern-day rebirth of the nation of Israel seventy years ago is such an unprecedented act in world history, and is considered an outright “miracle” in the most classic sense of the word—that is, it could only have been achieved by divine intervention.

This is especially true in light of the uniquely dire circumstances under which Israel’s re-emergence among the family of nations took place. The prophet Isaiah alludes to these travails when he asks: “Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children” (Isaiah 66:8).

In 1948 the Jewish people were still reeling from the tragedy of the Holocaust. The enormous scope and depravity of the Nazi genocide against the Jews was still being uncovered, and two-thirds of European Jewry had been gassed or gunned down en masse. Most of the surviving remnant were on the brink of starvation, and few wanted to return to their homes. They knew their neighbors had never really accepted them, and likely never would.

Such calamities were nothing new for the Jews. For centuries they had faced pogroms, blood libels, forced conversions, expulsions, and other forms of religious persecutions, yet this was the lowest point. The racial anti-Semitism of the Nazis had reduced them to sub-human status as if they were vermin slated for extermination. As a people, the Jews felt they had reached a dead end.

The prophet Ezekiel spoke of such a time when Israel would say as a people: “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!” Yet God declared that all was not lost. At their lowest moment, He would assuredly “cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel” (Ezekiel 37:11–12).

The great miracle of Israel’s rebirth in May 1948 was that it happened just three years after the Holocaust ended. From the ashes of the Shoah (Hebrew for Holocaust), the Jewish people suddenly arose and reestablished sovereignty in their ancient homeland. At their time of greatest weakness, they were empowered in a way that had alluded them for centuries, and it was nothing less than the resurrection power of God at work.

Even more astounding is the fact that Israel faced another serious threat of annihilation as it was reborn. When its founding leader David Ben-Gurion declared independence for the Jewish state on May 14, 1948, it was immediately attacked by five invading Arab armies. These Arab forces were armed, trained, and in some cases even commanded by officers from some of the world’s major powers. In contrast, the international community placed...
an arms embargo on the fledgling state of Israel, and only one small nation—Czechoslovakia—dared defy it by supplying weapons to the desperate Jewish fighters. In many instances, frail Holocaust survivors arriving from Europe were thrown straight into battle without even shoes on their feet. Arab leaders had vowed to “drive the Jews into the sea,” but somehow Israel prevailed.

The following year of 1949, the United Nations voted to admit Israel as a full member state during a time when numerous nations were securing their independence and joining the international community. Many nations were also born out of the widespread suffering of the First and Second World Wars. There was, therefore, great sympathy for these nations, as well as Israel—although Israel stands out for the way it overcame the greatest odds and rewrote history.

The Jews are the only people who have been thoroughly uprooted from their homeland to then return to that same land and reestablish their national sovereignty. You could search far and wide and still not find another people who have managed to do this even once, and yet the Jews have done it twice! What makes this all the more remarkable is that the Bible, which they gifted to the world, told us all this was going to happen before it came to be. The Scriptures declared beforehand that there would be two scatterings and two returns of the Jewish people—first from Babylon and then from all the nations of the earth.

It was this very Bible that kept the Jews together as a people during their long centuries of exile. This same Bible planted in them a prophetic hope of return and national restoration, which became the driving force that brought them back—quite literally—from the grave.

The apostle Paul relies on these prophetic passages when he speaks of a promised future restoration for Israel in the book of Romans. He teaches that even Israel’s scattering had a redemptive purpose—for the gospel to go out to all nations and thereby reconcile many to God. Yet when it finally comes time for Israel’s ingathering, Paul says we can expect no less than “life from the dead!” (Romans 11:11–15). That is, the resurrection power of God will still be at work in the earth when the Jewish nation is finally restored in their ancient homeland.

We live in a day when we have witnessed these things coming to pass. Seventy years after Israel’s miraculous rebirth causes us to question: Will we align with those who are trying to put the Jewish people back in their graves? Or will we be among those who are found rejoicing in the incredible way God has brought the nation of Israel back to life?
The Qassam rocket strikes your home and splinters into lethal fragments. Moments before, you were enjoying life with your children on the playground. The 15-second warning before impact just wasn’t enough time to get the family to the nearby community shelter, or for Iron Dome to intercept the incoming rocket. Even if you did make it to safety, it quickly becomes uncomfortable and frightening to be cooped up in an underground shelter with your kids and other families. This is the nightmarish but sadly realistic dilemma parents in Israel’s frontline communities face. Thankfully, there are viable solutions to solve this perilous predicament.

**Destructive Power for Protective Purposes**

Whom do you turn to in order to deal with such a threat? Ironically, but logically, the ones who best know how to counter lethal ordinance are the ones who themselves produce high-powered explosives and munitions. This is why ICEJ AID was invited to tour Israeli Military Industries (IMI) recently, at an undisclosed location in Israel.

IMI is the only company in Israel with a test lab to simulate and experiment firing live rockets. IMI has reverse-engineered the most prolific rockets that Hezbollah and Hamas have in their arsenals, and has constructed mobile, highly versatile shelters that can sustain multiple direct hits from Qassam and Grad rockets.

One of IMI’s newest innovations is a shelter integrated with a playground. But why is a mega-defence conglomerate that exports to 70 countries worldwide interested in meeting with a Christian non-profit and building this type of shelter? Because their core vision is to protect that which matters most: the Israeli family unit. This is why the ICEJ’s efforts to fund bomb shelters make us highly honored and important customers.

**Innovating to Protect Vital Routines**

The R&D (research and development) expended on shelters and reinforcement measures is impressive. Beyond immediate physical survivability are considerations for the viability of shelters as enabling structures for protecting the routines of civilian life. This is why the playground shelter is so important. It allows a semblance of normal life even in a frontline area.

The ICEJ wants to do its part to protect civilian life during conflagrations and the constant pressure and threat that Israel’s adversaries try to impose on Jewish life in Israel. Join us in defending the most vital unit in Israel—the family. We are making a real difference, but there is still work to be done. Please help us build Israel’s defenses today.

**ROCKETS DISRUPT CEREMONY**

**BY AARON HECT**

On December 29, 2017, a ceremony was held at Kibbutz Kfar Aza near the border between Israel and the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. This ceremony was to mark the would-be twenty-fourth birthday of Oron Shaul, an IDF soldier who was killed in action during the 2014 war between Israel and Hamas. The ceremony, which was meant in part to protest the fact that Hamas refuses to hand over Shaul’s remains so his family can bury him, was disrupted by an unusual daytime barrage of Qassam rockets from Gaza. The Iron Dome air defense system intercepted two of the rockets while a third landed near a building in the kibbutz, causing some damage, but no casualties.

Israelis take cover during a rocket attack at Kibbutz Kfar Aza near the Gaza border, December 29, 2017.

**DONATE ONLINE**

Fund a bomb shelter today at: www.icejusa.org/bombshelter
“The Boat is Sailing” is a unique program that helps people with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by using sailing as a rehabilitative and therapeutic tool. The ICEJ is sponsoring participants in this effective program that was developed by Yoav Ben David, a former POW from 1973, who personally dealt with PTSD. For many years, Ben David searched for a way to cope.

He discovered sailing in a team can boost the rehabilitation process. “The participants come to know that their disability need not deny them exhilarating new experiences in unfamiliar settings, such as in the open sea,” Ben David says. “They learn to take responsibility for others and to deal with challenging situations as well as working in a team. They are also encouraged to share their traumatic experience among program participants.”

A research study conducted by the Ministry of Defense in 2009 showed that this program rehabilitates individuals with PTSD much better than any other traditional treatment. “The participants find a reason to live, wake up in the morning, engage in work, and interact with other people.

It also gives them the motivation to integrate into life and society again,” says Ben David. Sixty participants meet once a week in six small groups for sailing sessions to learn about the sea, symptoms of PTSD, and sailing skills. Participants can later become counselors and guide new members in this activity.

One of the participants, Yotam, experienced a terrorist attack that killed many soldiers at the bus stop where he was waiting to return to his base. Yotam doesn’t recall much—except that someone stopped him as he walked down the road drenched in blood. Shock and trauma affected him so deeply that he withdrew from all social contact and was unable to cope with daily life. Slowly, through “The Boat is Sailing” program, he began to find a way to deal with his PTSD. His small group gives him the strength to carry on despite the ongoing emotional challenges that he continues to face every day.

Your donation will enable additional veterans to benefit from this effective treatment. Donate online to: www.icejusa.org/crisis
CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE IN ICEJ HOMECARE

By Kayla Ellingsworth

For 25 years, Corrie van Maanen has been involved in impacting many hearts with the love of God through ICEJ Homecare. These treasured people are invalids and elderly who were part of the flood of Russian speakers that poured into Israel after the Iron Curtain came down. From the beginning, the ICEJ was involved in this new wave of immigration, and Homecare became an important part of the hand of friendship being offered to the Jewish people.

Over the years, the Homecare team has proven to be a consistent and faithful blessing to many in need. Their dedication nurtures the deep connections that continue to be made between Christian nurses and the Jewish recipients of God’s love through them. After 25 years of faithfully serving God here in Israel through Homecare, the first word on Corrie’s lips is “thankful.” Corrie can only give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness, wisdom, and strength, given all of the difficult situations she has faced while caring for people.

“Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul” (Jeremiah 32:41).

We invite you to join with us in prayer and thanksgiving to our faithful God for all that He did, is doing, and will do through ICEJ Homecare to impact each and every one of these treasured lives.

Learn more at www.icejusa.org/homecare

A HIDDEN HERO
Assisted by ICEJ Homecare

By Kayla Ellingsworth

In 1941, when German forces were poised to conquer Kiev in Ukraine, six-year-old Sergei was standing at the door of his house with his young mom. A group of Soviet soldiers came to evacuate them, barking the order, “Take papers for you and the boy, nothing else. You have to leave in 10 minutes, otherwise you will be killed.” Sergei and his mother were loaded into a cattle car along with several other Jewish families and began an unbearable month-long 1118-mile journey to Siberia. As Sergei shared his story with our Homecare worker, Corrie van Maanen, she could feel the weight of his story as he seemed to relive these memories right before her eyes.

From a painful past, Sergei pressed into a hopeful future as he married his beloved wife, Alana. After making Aliyah to Israel 25 years ago, Alana suffered a serious brain hemorrhage, leaving her bedridden. Sergei became a hidden hero as he took on the role of full-time caretaker for his wife, and continued to do so for the next 20 years with the help of ICEJ’s Homecare team.

The couple moved to a family member’s house, and yet ICEJ Homecare kept in touch through several visits each year. Last November, Alana passed away. Our Corrie van Maanen was considered like family, so they invited her to the funeral and even to the family’s home afterward. Sergei was heartbroken to lose his wife, yet was grateful to live in Israel among his Jewish brethren. Even at the age of 82, he is currently learning Hebrew at an Ulpan for the first time.

God is doing mighty works through the ICEJ Homecare as these Jewish people open not only their doors but their hearts as well. There are many hidden heroes like Sergei and Alana and we are privileged to bring them comfort and hope.

DONATE ONLINE

For more stories and an opportunity to donate to these hidden heroes, please visit: www.icejusa.org/homecare
We also had occasion to rejoice on this visit up north where we inspected a new school computer room furnished with 26 computers, where there formerly had been none, in the Druze village of Mas’ada. We were welcomed with a parade worthy of any high dignitary, and the principal of the school was delighted with our gift saying, “Your wonderful donation will help our students advance so they all can reach their potential and excel. These computers, for which we are so grateful, will greatly help toward that goal. Thank you so much!” It was a festive opening in the presence of the head of the local council, the principal and his staff, parents and students, and other dignitaries.

Over the past few years, the ICEJ has had the privilege of equipping many school rooms in different Druze villages in the north of Israel. These initiatives are very important. Unlike Muslim Arabs, most Druze have a strong sense of civic duty toward the State of Israel, even to the point of giving their life in the line of duty, as Hail Stawi did. This makes the Druze natural allies and partners for the Jewish state. Strengthening Druze communities helps demonstrate that Jews and Arabs need not be at each other’s throats, but can coexist and protect Israel together.

Jesus tells us to love God and our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27), and He shows us the way to love our neighbor through the parable of the Good Samaritan. In summary, a man was traveling along the road and was attacked by thieves who left him half dead. A priest saw him, and merely passed by. Likewise, a Levite saw him and passed by, but when a Samaritan saw the man, “he had compassion on him” (Luke 10:30–34).

Emmanuel, the team leader from FAI, explained the vision that propelled his team to courageously go into a battle zone in Syria to save as many lives as possible. “We have a nation bleeding and people dying every day. Just like the story of the Good Samaritan, everyone is watching. We see the priest and the Levites pass by, but it takes someone to come off of their “high horse” to help the hurting.”

Please pray fervently for our Christian brothers and sisters going into war zones to share the love of God and save lives! Join us in being like the Good Samaritan—a picture of our Savior, Jesus—by joining the Isaiah 62 campaign to pray for the people who are wounded and in need at:

www.icejusa.org/isaiah-62-prayer-initiative

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This January, the largest contingent of international pastors and church leaders to date chose to launch the new year at the ICEJ’s annual Envision Conference in Jerusalem.

Their intent was to refresh their spirits and gain new insight and inspiration about what’s afoot in the Land of Israel—in short, to get the pulse of God’s purposes and moves there. The ICEJ’s leadership, local Messianic leaders, and Israeli politicians and military personnel were ready to share critical knowledge and equip participants with novel perspectives.

Through panel discussions, conference participants found out firsthand about the situation on the ground from several Jewish Messianic and Arab-Christian leaders, who spoke candidly about advances and struggles. In this manner, participants learned how Israel is a light unto the nations through a Messianic-led project: developing a peer-to-peer app to enable African farmers to get their crop to market in a timely fashion by connecting them directly with far-away buyers. Elisabet Helsvig from Norway appreciated this direct access: “I encourage everyone to come to the country and hear the words from the people of the country and from the people who have been long supporters and friends of Zion.” In general, Israel’s small Messianic body is coming into its own and boldly setting up ministries and discipleship initiatives aimed at deeply rooted growth.

Events in Israel do not occur in isolation to the rest of the world.

Dealing with Israel does not mean a narrow focus on events and trends in the Jewish nation itself. Israel is God’s central key to understanding what is happening in the prophetic timetable for His people, the Middle East, and the world.

Islam’s status in the Middle East has been severely invalidated through uprisings and the scourge of ISIS, causing many Muslims to question the religion and be open to the gospel, reported Fabian Grech from Iraq, who thanked God that “in the midst of darkness Your name is becoming famous!” Lt. Col. Moreno gave the conference’s perhaps finest example of Jewish-Christian relations as he reported on the IDF’s cooperation with Christian organizations, such as the ICEJ, to save lives and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. IDF soldiers and Christian aid workers were
mutually impressed by the others' will to sacrifice and serve.

An important element of Envision is how participants are exposed to Jewish leaders. This happened with a visit from Keren HaYesod's World Chairman, and former MK, Moodi Sandberg. Participants also interacted with Israeli politicians and decision-makers at a visit to the Knesset. Another excursion highlight included an outing to Shiloh and the Barkan industrial park.

“The mixture between going out and seeing the sites and getting input from the Word of God from so many people—I have been to a lot of conferences, but this one is really unique, and I really appreciate it. It is really awesome,” said Pastor Iris Trumper from Germany.

Envision again proved that it is the perfect venue for equipping pastors and ministry leaders with the truth regarding Israel and all of its people. Those who attended are now in a greater position to be ambassadors for the Lord regarding his purposes for the Jewish people.

Sign up for next year's Envision conference and tour here: www.icejusa.org/envision-2019
Join the ICEJ’s
Shomer Society
(Keeper of Israel Society)

Consider the ICEJ in Your Will or Estate Plans

With proper foresight and planning, it is possible for you to leave a legacy of blessing Israel. The ICEJ has worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of Israel for over 37 years and with your help will be doing so for many more to come. Your planned gift of cash, stocks and bonds, mutual funds, life insurance, excess in retirement funds, property, or a gift annuity are excellent ways to help the ICEJ carry on your love for Israel.

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What Does the Bible Say About the Return of the Jews to Their Homeland?

By Susan Michael, ICEJ USA Director

A special term from the Hebrew Bible is used to describe the process of returning to the Land—Aliyah, which means, to “ascend.” It was used in ancient times in reference to Jewish pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem for the three great biblical Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Thus, the process of making Aliyah today is seen as having spiritual meaning beyond the physical act of return.

Let’s see what the Bible has to say about the modern-day return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland—the Land of Israel.

There Are Two Returns

Isaiah 11:11 indicates there would be a day when God would raise his hand “a second time” to gather the children of Israel to their homeland. The first return was predicted by the prophet Jeremiah to take place after Israel had been in captivity for 70 years (Jeremiah 29:10), and according to Ezra 1:1 happened precisely as foretold. After 500 years of intermittent and partial sovereignty in the Land, the Jewish people were once again dispersed under the Roman Empire in AD 70. After 2,000 years, they have now returned and reestablished sovereignty. No other people group has managed to survive two exiles—much less one that was 2,000 years long—and then return to reestablish national sovereignty.

The Second Return Is From All Nations

This second return was to be from every nation where they had been dispersed (Jeremiah 16:14–15; 23:3, 7–8; 29:14; 31:7–8), not just Babylon. Over the past 120 years or so, more than 3.5 million Jews have immigrated to the Land of Israel from all over the world—from the north, south, east, and west—in literal fulfillment of God’s promises (Isaiah 43:5–6).

A Banner To The Nations

The regathering of the Jewish people to their land is depicted as God’s banner to the nations (Isaiah 11:12). A banner was often a rallying point in military operations, and was carried to lead a formation, but often bore the name or image of that army’s God. Using this symbolism, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah considered the ingathering as a proclamation of God’s name and His character to the nations (Ezekiel 28:25).

The act of gentiles bringing His people home—the people He loves and will use to bless the whole earth—is so sacred it is likened to “bringing an offering to the Lord.”

God vindicates His name because it has been profaned before the nations through the disobedience and exile of His people (Ezekiel 36:22). He will demonstrate His holiness (Ezekiel 36:22–23) and His faithfulness, whether His children are deserving or not. It reflects His love and mercy toward them (Isaiah 60:8–10), as well as toward the world He plans to redeem and fill with His truth and glory for eternity (Psalm 102:16–22).

This Great Act of God Leads to Revival

The ingathering of the Jewish people in modern times holds great promise for Israel and for the world, as it heralds the soon coming of the Messianic kingdom. While it is a physical return with many logistical and practical aspects, it is a sacred thing because it is building a platform for the coming of the kingdom of God, when the glory of the Lord appears (Psalm 102:15–16) and He tabernacles with man (Ezekiel 37:26–27; Revelation 21:3).

That the gentiles are called to assist in this process is an amazing and holy thing. Isaiah 66:20 describes the act of gentiles bringing His people home—the people He loves and will use to bless the whole earth—as so sacred it is likened to “bringing an offering to the Lord.” What a wonderful image depicting the biblical significance of the return of the Jews to their homeland.

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