A JUBILEE YEAR FOR JERUSALEM

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST
Caring for Survivors
Dear Friends,

This is a year of many anniversaries. Exactly 100 years ago in 1917, Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration, laying an important foundation stone for the modern state of Israel. With this decree, the British government expressed its support for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” That same week, Jerusalem was liberated by British troops under General Edmund Allenby, ending almost 1,300 years of Islamic rule over the city.

It has also been 70 years since the summer of 1947 when the ship “Exodus,” carrying some 4,500 Jewish refugees, left port in France on a sea voyage which would capture the attention of the entire world. The tragic odyssey of the ship and its desperate passengers helped to convince the United Nations the following November to vote for creating an independent Jewish state in parts of Mandatory Palestine. Of course, the State of Israel was declared the following year.

Finally, exactly 50 years after General Allenby entered Jerusalem, IDF forces reunited the city under Israeli sovereignty during the Six-Day War of June 1967.

These anniversaries are heralds of the same message: “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock” (Jeremiah 31:10). Indeed, “The time to favor her (Zion), yes, the set time, has come” (Psalm 102:13). One does not need to be an expert on prophecy to recognize that these ancient divine promises are being fulfilled today, right before our very eyes. Thus, 2017 is a unique opportunity to look back on what the Lord has done—to give thanks for His faithfulness while simultaneously looking to the future and expecting God to accomplish even greater things with Israel and the nations in the days ahead.

It is quite remarkable that in 2017, exactly 50 years after Jerusalem’s reunification, another historic event might occur: the return of national embassies to Jerusalem. Our hopes are that this coming Jubilee season will also usher in the spiritual restoration of Israel which was prophesied by so many of the Hebrew prophets long ago, so that out of Zion the blessings of God will flow to the ends of the earth.

Now, this will not go unopposed. Therefore, our prayers and support for Israel are needed today more than ever before. We are living in exciting times, indeed.

Let us join hands, pray, and work until He comes!

In Christ,

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
President
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

COVER PHOTO:
City of Jerusalem at sunrise

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A JUBILEE YEAR FOR JERUSALEM

The Time to Favor Zion Has Come!

BY DAVID PARSONS
Fifty years removed, it is hard for us to imagine the painful division of Jerusalem between 1948 and 1967. Israel’s capital city is now so bustling and alive. But old-timers will tell you life was extremely difficult during those dismal 19 years when the city was torn between Israel and the Jordanians.

Local Jewish residents were certainly relieved in 1948 when the siege on western Jerusalem was lifted by the arrival of aid convoys along the “Burma Road.” But for the next two decades, the Jewish half of the city remained precariously surrounded by Arab forces on three sides, with a narrow corridor through the Jerusalem hills linking them to the rest of the country. The Jews still faced the threat of sniper fire by Jordanian troops perched on the Old City walls. Arab artillery batteries with commanding views circled the hilltops around the Jewish side of town. Windows remained boarded up in many homes and businesses. Some neighborhoods still had curfews at night.

Perhaps the greatest hardship for the city’s Jewish population was being separated from the Old City and the Western Wall. The Jewish Quarter had been emptied at gunpoint during the fighting in 1948. Jewish graves were desecrated and synagogues destroyed. Arab squatters built a hovel of tin shacks in front of the Western Wall. A long line of bunkers, concrete walls, minefields, and barbed-wire fences were strewn along no-man’s land, cutting the city in half. The main road to Jaffa Gate dead-ended into a war zone.

Jerusalem’s ancient Christian communities also faced abuses under Jordanian rule. The Old City and Bethlehem were only open to Christian visitors on Christmas and Easter. Christians could not buy properties, and church-run schools were forced to teach the Koran. Because of these repressive policies, half of the 25,000 Arab Christians in east Jerusalem abandoned the city between 1949 and June 1967.

Then came the Six-Day War, when Israeli forces scored a surprisingly swift and complete victory over five Arab armies, and liberated the beloved city of Jerusalem. After two decades of division, isolation, and neglect, a reunited Jerusalem was free to grow and prosper once more.

This year, the Israeli people will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the reunification of the city, an incredible moment immortalized in the song “Jerusalem of Gold.” It is also 100 years since British General Edmund Allenby liberated the city from another Muslim ruler—the Ottoman Turks. These two significant milestones in the history of modern Jerusalem attest that there is a Jubilee cycle
operating over the city of God that is propelling Jerusalem forward into its ultimate destiny in Him.

The Bible describes the Jubilee as a special time every 50 years when the Land of Israel was to be freed from all leases and encumbrances, and all its inhabitants set free from debts and servitudes. According to the commands given in Leviticus 25, all lands were to revert to their original owners. Sadly, through the centuries, Israel was rarely able to keep all the requirements of the Jubilee. But today we can see God Himself still works in Jubilee cycles. This means that if Jerusalem experienced a dramatic liberation 100 years ago, followed by another release 50 years ago, we can expect yet another amazing release for the city this very year of 2017. God is slowly but surely rolling back the forces that would continue gentile rule over Jerusalem so that the city can finally fulfill its destiny and be back in Jewish hands. That destiny is to be the throne of Messiah and a “house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7; Luke 19:46; see also Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 2:3; Isaiah 24:23; Revelation 14:1).

One key passage of Scripture in this regard is Psalm 102, which declares that there is an appointed time of divine favor for Zion. In verse 16, the psalmist proclaimed: “For the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory.” Two verses later, we are told this was written “for the generation to come.” In the original Hebrew this phrase reads dor achoron, or “last generation.” Thus, this Psalm is referring to the restoration of Israel in the last days, and specifically to Mount Zion, where the temple and altar of sacrifice stood. From their very first mentions in Scripture (Genesis 14:18; 22:2), this city and this specific mountain have always been tied to God’s redemptive purposes. Eventually, the Lord placed His Shekinah presence there, and later gave His life as a ransom for sin on this very mountain.

Today, the Lord is once again building up Zion for redemptive purposes. He is doing this through the Jewish people. In Scripture, they are identified as the “builders” of Jerusalem. We can glean this from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as from the powerful reference in Psalm 118:22. Likewise, Psalm 147:2 says that the Lord builds up Jerusalem by “gather[ing] together the outcasts of Israel.” This is a work He is “zealous for” (Zechariah 1:14; 8:2).

The Bible declares, “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:26; see also Psalm 14:7; Psalm 53:6; Isaiah 59:20–21). Magnificently, the same place the Jews once rejected their Messiah will one day be where they receive Him as King. No doubt this is why there is such an intense diplomatic battle over the fate of Jerusalem—but at heart, it is a spiritual battle. New US President Donald Trump has expressed a desire to move the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to the Israeli capital of Jerusalem. Many Arab and Islamic figures are enraged and threatening a violent response. But in a year of Jubilee, we can pray for and expect divine favor so that the entire city will revert to its original owners and be released into the purposes of God.
Travel to Israel for the Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles and tour the land of the Bible. Join thousands of Christians from more than 80 nations to worship the King of kings in Jerusalem! There is no better time to visit Israel than during this Feast of the Lord!

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Remembering Those Who Perished, Caring for the Survivors

BY ESTERA WIEJA

Two days each year are set aside to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, and are meant to be an important reminder to the world to never turn a blind eye to hatred. European Jews that survived Nazi atrocities are now in our care at the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors.

The first Holocaust Remembrance Day is observed internationally on January 27—the day the concentration camp in Auschwitz was liberated by Allied forces. The second Holocaust Memorial Day observed in Israel is known as Yom HaShoah. This day usually falls in April or early May and is linked to the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. Located in the Land of Israel, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, representing the global family of Christians, is mindful of both commemorations.

In January, the ICEJ marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day by laying a wreath at Yad Vashem and participating in a ceremony with Israeli Knesset members and hundreds of guests at our Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa. Holocaust Survivors Mordechai Lieber and Shalom Sztamberg shared personal stories of their horrible experiences during the Holocaust, remembering the many family members of attendees who perished.
“We are here today to remember and we will not cease to do so, and we will never forget what happened during the Holocaust.”

Haifa Home resident Shoshanna Kolmer, together with Haifa Home Director Shimon Sabag and ICEJ Senior Spokesman David Parsons, ignited a flame of commemoration. “We are here today to remember and we will not cease to do so, and we will never forget what happened during the Holocaust,” Yudit Setz from the ICEJ assured the crowd, addressing the Survivors present. “We love you and care for you and we will stand with you always.”

In April on Yom HaShoah, Israelis stopped in their tracks and remained silent for one minute to remember the ones they lost to human hatred during World War II. ICEJ staff stood together with the people of Israel during their moment of mourning and reflection.

YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL in making sure Holocaust Survivors KNOW LOVE in their latter days. Your gift to the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors ensures that the elderly in our care live the remainder of their days in dignity. www.icejusa.org/haifa
Touching Lives of Holocaust Survivors

RECENT BIRTHDAYS
Several residents of the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors recently celebrated their birthdays, turning 86, 89, 94, and even 95! Our pretty Miriam was one of them, turning 95. Looking at this gorgeous little lady, one can only marvel at the fact that she has reached such a significant age considering the tragedies she has survived. She is still bright and active, often sharing her life lessons and wisdom with us. We hope we can enjoy her for many more days to come.

Celebrating these lives brings a realization that the residents are aging. We are honored that we can still look after them and bring them the love, joy, and comfort they are longing for. Through your generous contributions, you play a huge part in the extension of this compassion to the residents. On behalf of all the Haifa Home residents, thank you!

Please make this special project known among your family, friends, churches, and work so that we can continue to give these and other needy Survivors a home and share God’s love with them. To support the residents of the Haifa Home go to: www.icejusa.org/Haifa

DREAMING OF TEA PARTIES
When ICEJ staff visited Rita for her birthday she opened the door with a big smile and warmly welcomed us into her apartment. Straight away she prepared tea and set the table nicely with some dried fruit, napkins, and the finishing touches of a candle, which created a warm and cozy atmosphere.

While drinking tea together and chatting, one could not help but think of the hardships Rita went through as a child. When she was a little girl during the Holocaust, a Christian family hid Rita and her family in a hole under their cowshed. The days and nights were long and boring, but Rita passed the time by dreaming of tea parties. She would make little tea cups from the mud in the hole and imagine her friends around her drinking tea together. Now almost 75 years later, it is humbling to realize that her dream of having tea parties has become a reality.

IN MEMORIAM
Benjamin, the oldest resident of the home, passed away on Wednesday, March 15, 2017. He reached the beautiful age of 97 years.

Originally from Lithuania, Benjamin survived the war on false papers in the Netherlands. After the war he came by boat to Israel, where he met his future Dutch wife. Once in Israel, he became an accountant—although he had dreamed of studying at Technion Israel Institute of Technology his whole life.

About six years ago, Benjamin came to live in the Haifa Home. Over the years we saw his health deteriorating. In his last months, he hardly left his room. However, every time we visited him, he shared stories from the past with us in Dutch. Up until he left this earth, he could speak several languages.
The Kfar Silver Youth Village operates within Kibbutz Kfar Silver and includes a boarding home, a 7–12 grade school serving some 600 students, and an agricultural farm that allows for agricultural vocational training. The school also provides automotive vocational training.

Youth villages with a boarding school first developed in Mandate Palestine in the 1930s to care for groups of children and teenagers fleeing the Nazis. Residential education is still found in Israel and believed to have exceptional value for two major population targets: immigrant youth, and young people from deprived social groups. Residential education creates a strong, influential environment that neutralizes the negative influence of an underprivileged neighborhood, promotes social integration, and provides a broad range of extracurricular activities that may not be available in the home setting.

Since Kfar Silver is an agricultural training school, it allows youth to work with animals and different crops, and to grow gardens. There is a great educational benefit to be gained by these young people working with their hands in nature.

The village is located about nine miles from the Gaza border which means students have less than 25 seconds to get to a shelter in the case of incoming rocket fire. The director of the youth village, Shimon Shlomo—an Ethiopian man who previously served as a member of Knesset—worked with the ICEJ to determine the most vulnerable areas in the youth village. Since kids use the soccer field on a continual basis, the shelter was placed there and not too far from the cafeteria.
The time has come for the nations to right a historic injustice by officially recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and moving their embassies there. The promise by new US President Donald Trump to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem may be stirring anger and threats in some quarters. However, 2017 is the right time to make this long overdue move as we mark 50 years since the city of Jerusalem was reunited under Israeli sovereignty in June 1967.

In 1950 a reborn Israel declared Jerusalem to be its capital and placed its main government institutions there, including the parliament, president, prime minister, and Supreme Court. This occurred even though Jewish western Jerusalem was still precariously surrounded at the time by hostile Arab forces. This decision reflected the deep spiritual, historic, and cultural significance the Jewish people attach to Jerusalem.

Over the seven decades since, the international community has generally extended de facto recognition to Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. Nearly all visiting heads of state and other foreign officials have come up to Jerusalem to conduct business with their Israeli counterparts. This has included Arab leaders such as Anwar Sadat, who made his historic peace mission to Jerusalem, not Tel Aviv. Palestinian leaders Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas have also held talks with Israeli leaders in Jerusalem.

However, the international community has refused to extend de jure recognition to Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, and has instead placed their embassies in Tel Aviv. In the case of the United States, this is a gross anomaly; Israel is America’s only democratic ally whose official embassy is not located in the capital city chosen by the host country. The United States has never even recognized western Jerusalem as part of the Jewish state.

This unjust policy originated in the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947, which called for dividing Mandatory Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state, but with Jerusalem set aside as a corpus separatum under international supervision. This UN decision to “internationalize” the city reflected a certain colonialist attitude toward the new Jewish state. Many Christian and Muslim leaders also were reluctant to see the holy sites of Jerusalem placed under Jewish control. Even so, it is often overlooked that the UN Partition Plan specifically provided for a citywide referendum within 10 years which would allow residents to decide the fate of the city. So, the internationalization of Jerusalem was merely intended as a temporary measure, and the Jewish majority in the city would have soon ensured it became part of Israel. Nonetheless, President Harry Truman embraced the concept of internationalization for...
Jerusalem, setting a course for US policy on the city that has since drifted into folly. Meanwhile, many in the European Union still push for internationalizing Jerusalem, even though it is a defunct idea rejected by all the core claimants to the city.

Since the city was reunited in June 1967 there has been a continuing effort to deny Israel and the Jewish people their rightful place in Jerusalem under other pretexts. In more recent decades, the United States has joined the international community in stressing the need to be neutral when it comes to Jerusalem, so as not to prejudge the outcome of negotiations over the city between Israel and the Palestinians.

But this is a dishonest argument as many nations including the United States have located their senior envoys to the Palestinians—some at the ambassadorial level—in Jerusalem, while their Israeli equivalents sit in Tel Aviv.

Further, the UN Security Council recently adopted a resolution which thoroughly contradicts this even-handed approach. Passed in December, UNSC resolution 2334 declared east Jerusalem to be “occupied Palestinian territory,” and determined that Israeli actions there constitute “a flagrant violation of international law.” Thus, the United Nations itself has deliberately prejudged the outcome of talks over the future status of Jerusalem. There is an urgent need to rectify this major diplomatic blunder.

This leaves only one remaining excuse for the United States and other nations who still refuse to move their embassies to Jerusalem: fear of the potentially violent Arab and Islamic response. This attitude of weakness is reflected in the way recent US administrations have exercised the presidential waiver authority added at the last minute to the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, delaying the embassy move every six months on the grounds that it is in US “national security interests.” This is not a policy based on principle, fairness, or historical right, but solely on timidity over the possible Arab-Islamic reaction—and it has effectively granted the Palestinians a veto over US decision-making.

The time has come to finally right this wrong by the United States recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and moving its embassy there. This show of resolve by the Trump administration would not only remove a diplomatic stain, but also signal the Palestinians that the time for compromise has arrived. It also would send a message to the entire world that America stands by its allies and that peace and progress for the region will no longer be held hostage by fear.

Surely, there will be no harm to the outcome of peace talks if the US Embassy is relocated to west Jerusalem; all parties know this sector of the city will remain part of Israel in any final status agreement. Nor is anyone seriously looking for a return to that dismal era from 1948 to 1967 when the city was forcibly divided. Israel can still work out a way to share an open and united Jerusalem with the Palestinians.

Certainly, Jerusalem must be kept open for all those with faith in God, but the Jewish people are the proper custodians of the city. Christians and Muslims can trust the Jewish people in this regard, because the Jews’ own Hebrew Scriptures demand they maintain the city as a “house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7). Israel has guaranteed religious freedom in its Declaration of Independence, and is committed to maintaining the status quo concerning the city’s holy sites. In fact, of all the sovereign rulers over Jerusalem down through the centuries, Israel has compiled the best track record in ensuring access and freedom of worship in the city.

While some Muslim extremists might vent their rage and threaten violence, we should not take all the recent warnings of chaos and destruction at face value. Jerusalem remains a sensitive issue, but the Trump administration has a unique opportunity this year to lead a group of freedom-loving democratic nations back up to Jerusalem. Such a collective return to the city would go far in defusing tensions in the region.

David Parsons is the vice president and senior international spokesman for the ICEJ. He authored the initial draft of the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 for Sen. Jon Kyl.
ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler Visits USA

The USA Branch of the ICEJ hosted a series of meetings, including two pastors’ lunches, during ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler’s recent visit to the country. The week began with a pastors’ lunch at Trinity International Church in Lake Worth, Florida that was co-sponsored by Rev. Kevin and Donna Jessip of Global Strategic Alliance. The group of some 70 pastors and leaders gathered to hear Dr. Bühler and opening remarks by Rev. Reinhard Bonnke.

Another 50 pastors and leaders attended a lunch at First Baptist Church in Cleveland, Tennessee, sponsored by Dr. Tony Crisp and Eastanallee Baptist Church. Dr. Crisp has joined the ICEJ USA team as its Strategic Initiatives Director and will be assisting the branch in strategic planning, leadership development, and church relations. While in East Tennessee, Dr. Bühler and ICEJ USA Director Susan Michael spoke at both Eastanallee Baptist Church and a Night to Honor Israel at Beach Park Baptist Church.

Dr. Bühler ended his time in the United States at the annual National Religious Broadcasters’ Convention where several thousand Christian broadcasters gather each year for networking and empowerment for greater impact in their ministries. Dr. Bühler held private meetings with key Christian leaders to discuss the ICEJ’s television programming and other key initiatives. The ICEJ USA shared exhibit space with the Israeli Ministry of Tourism; ICEJ representatives spoke with many attendees about the ICEJ’s ministry in Israel and the USA Branch’s extensive tour offerings for pastors, young adults, churches, and the annual Feast of Tabernacles.

After his visit, Dr. Bühler remarked, “The time in the USA was really a blessing, and we are grateful to God for the great opportunities that are opening up for our ministry there.”

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[Left to Right] ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler; Christ For All Nations Founder Rev. Reinhard Bonnke; ICEJ USA Director Susan Michael

[Left to Right] Pastor Robby Leach, Beach Park Baptist Church; ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler; ICEJ USA Director Susan Michael; ICEJ USA Strategic Initiatives Director Dr. Tony Crisp

Pastors’ Lunch at Trinity International Church, Lake Worth, Florida
Ireland ICEJ Branch Hosts USA Director

USA Branch Speakers at AIPAC

Three members of the ICEJ’s USA leadership were speakers at the annual AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, DC. Some 18,000 people attended—a majority from the American Jewish community—but also about 230 Christian activists. ICEJ speakers included ICEJ USA Director Susan Michael; Leadership Outreach Director Arlene Samuels; and ICEJ Strategic Initiatives Director Dr. Tony Crisp. Also in attendance was the ICEJ’s Czech Republic Branch Director, Mojmir Kallus.

Susan and George Michael recently traveled throughout Ireland speaking in churches on behalf of the ICEJ Ireland Branch. Their joint messages on the biblical significance of Israel coupled with God’s love for the descendants of Ishmael were extremely well received. Susan was also the keynote speaker at the annual Feast of Tabernacles gala held in the famous Ulster Hall in Belfast. The gathering of almost 800 ICEJ supporters included representatives from the local Jewish community who were incredibly moved by Susan’s words about the significance of Jerusalem and the love that both communities have for the city.
In January of this year, I flew to India to minister in four different states of this huge country. Pastor “Dany” Meka Padma Rao, our ICEJ India director—whom I have traveled and ministered with many times before—hosted me, as usual. But this time was radically different and very special since the Lord Jesus had just saved him from death and miraculously healed him.

In early November, Pastor Dany’s life should have ended on earth. Instead, God used this tragic incident to display His saving love and miraculous power in His servant for all to see and hear!

Pastor Dany’s Miraculous Survival and Healing

Early one morning in November 2016, Pastor Dany woke up at home in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, to pray and to work on his computer. He quietly went to the kitchen and closed the door behind him. While in the kitchen he suddenly noticed the smell of gas, so he checked for a leak. Everything seemed fine, so he proceeded to switch on his computer. Instantly the gas cylinder exploded in the kitchen, right where he was; the room erupted in flames, and the building started to collapse.
Pastor Dany cried out to the Lord with one single prayer: “Jesus, help me get out of here!” Protecting his face with his arms, he somehow stumbled through the raging fire, over rubble, and into the street where many neighbors had gathered who had heard the explosion. He was immediately taken to a clinic, but due to extensive burns on his arms, face, and legs, they could not treat him. Thankfully the second clinic received him and admitted him to the hospital.

While suffering from extreme physical pain and a great emotional sense of loss, his one comforting thought was: *my family is safe.* Had he not closed the kitchen door, this would not have been the case.

For three days Pastor Dany laid in bed in excruciating pain, his arms and legs covered with bandages, his face badly burned by the flames. During those three long days, he thought his life was over. He feared he would never be able to move his arms again, continue his ministry, or look after his family. He felt completely crushed.

However, early one morning following those three days, something miraculous and supernatural happened. Pastor Dany had a vision. In his vision, a man came to him asking, “Why are you crying? Why are you in pain?” With bewilderment, Pastor Dany answered, “I cannot move my arms. I cannot even move my fingers. Isn’t it obvious? My whole life is over.” Then Pastor Dany asked, “Who are you?”

The man in the vision replied, “I know who you are. I have met you in Jerusalem. Now start moving your fingers.”

In this vision, the man asked Pastor Dany to do exactly the thing he had been unable to do. By faith, Pastor Dany listened, and his fingers started to move! “Now move your arms,” he was told. He did, and his arms started working again! After experiencing this amazing healing in his arms, Pastor Dany proceeded to get out of bed and walk on his own to the bathroom. His mother, who had been with him in the hospital room for three days, was awestruck and asked her son what he was doing. Soon other patients came around to see how “the Pastor is now walking!”

On the fourth day, Pastor Dany requested his bandages with burnt skin be peeled off, reassuring the hospital staff he was ready to endure the pain. That day they removed 4.4 pounds of skin off of his frail body. The doctors had advised it would take two to three months before he would be ready to leave the hospital. But lo and behold, Pastor Dany walked out of the hospital on the ninth day and preached at his local church the very next day. No one could believe it!

Pastor Dany’s colleagues confessed they had lost all hope for him, but here he was, alive and well. Pastor Dany’s doctors requested his permission to use pictures of his healed arms. His neighbors had been amazed when he walked out from the collapsing building to begin with, and now that he was back—his burns completely healed—they gave glory to God for saving his life and healing him. Clearly, only the one true God could do this.

Ministering Together Again

This glorious and supernatural healing testimony became our theme as we joyously traveled together with Pastor Dany through his country. We ministered at local churches, led seminars for pastors and leaders, and did so much more throughout India—in Mumbai in Maharashtra state, in Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh state, in Bangalore in Karnataka state, and in Chennai in Tamil Nadu state. Hundreds from across denominations came to the ICEJ seminars. We were also privileged to minister in Chennai at a church of 3,000 members.

During this remarkable visit to India, I felt led in my heart to deliver a message to our Indian brothers and sisters. I told them how God used the nation of Israel to bring Jesus into this world. Joyfully we spoke of Jesus our Savior, whom the Virgin Mary carried in her womb, and who after His resurrection and glorification, came to live in our spirits and our hearts. Combined with Pastor Dany’s powerful testimony, the impact of this message was strong and encouraging to all who came to listen.

A MAN APPEARED TO PASTOR DANY IN A VISION AND SAID: “I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. I HAVE MET YOU IN JERUSALEM.”
A common accusation against Israel is that the state is founded upon land stolen from the Palestinian people. A quick review of history reveals a far different story.

**Ancient History**
The Jewish people's connection to the Land goes back some 4,000 years when, according to the Bible, God bequeathed the Land of Israel to the Jewish people through an unconditional covenant with Abraham. The Bible also records the Israelites' settlement of the Land and the establishment of the Davidic Kingdom there. Over the next 3,000 years the Jewish people suffered two exiles from the Land; however, a Jewish presence always remained.

The second exile began when Roman forces destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, slaughtered many Jewish inhabitants, took others into captivity to Rome, and caused many others to flee. In AD 135, Emperor Hadrian attempted to remove all traces of Jewish identity from the area by building a pagan city he named Aelia Capitolina over Jerusalem and erecting a temple to Jupiter on the Temple Mount. He also renamed the area of Judea “Palestine” after the Philistines, the ancient enemies of the Israelites.

Paganism eventually gave way to Christianity in Rome, and the Christian Byzantine Empire ruled over the region of Palestine for some 300 years until the Islamic invasion of the seventh century. After that, Islam ruled the Land of Israel for some 1,400 years until the defeat and breakup of the crumbling Ottoman Empire in World War I.

**International Backing of the Return**
In 1920, the Allied countries of Britain, France, Italy, and Japan met in San Remo, Italy to decide what to do with the lands in the Middle East vacated by the Ottoman Turks. At this conference, they resolved to establish mandatory trusts over these areas for their respective indigenous inhabitants, rather than claim them as conquered territories. These mandates were viewed as “sacred trusts” intended to prepare the areas for self-rule by the indigenous peoples. The 1917 Balfour Declaration had already declared Great Britain’s support for the establishment of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine, in recognition of the ancient Jewish claim and connection to the Land of Israel. Former British diplomat Lord Curzon called the Balfour Declaration Israel’s “Magna Carta.”

On July 24, 1922, the fifty-one members of the League of Nations, which was later succeeded by the United Nations, unanimously adopted the British Mandate for Palestine. This decision was based on international recognition that the Jewish people were indigenous to the Land of Israel. It thus enshrined into international law the legal right for Jewish people to

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settle anywhere in western Palestine, between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Professor Eliav Shochetman, an expert in international law at Hebrew University, explains: “The right of the people of Israel to the Land of Israel was recognized by the League of Nations in 1921 ... From this moment on [the Balfour Document] became accepted by all of the nations.” When the League of Nations ended and the United Nations was established, the UN Charter contained “a special clause, no. 80, in which it is said that all of the rights that were recognized in international law by the League of Nations still exist and are still binding ... there is no document in international law that grants rights of sovereignty to anybody other than to the Jewish people. This is the legal position,” according to Shochetman.

Land Purchases and Statehood
Several waves of Jewish immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resulted in economic development and job opportunities for the local population. Therefore, as the Jewish communities grew, so did the Arab population. Jewish organizations and individuals bought land from private landowners—many absentee—often paying exorbitant prices for barren desert and malaria-infested swamps. Upon statehood, Israel assumed title over any public lands once held by the Ottoman Empire.

Palestinian Grievances
After the UN Partition Plan of 1947, the Jews declared statehood, were recognized by the United Nations, and were admitted as full voting members to the international body. Israel’s founding was legal and accepted by the international community as such. However, the new Jewish State was immediately attacked by the surrounding Arab nations.

During the 1948 War of Independence, many Arab peoples living in areas now under Israeli sovereignty were displaced. Their displacement occurred for several reasons, including Arab leaders urging them to flee and promising their return after victory in a few short weeks. Most Arab refugees never left “Palestine” itself since they traveled a few miles to the other side of the fighting, while others crossed over into bordering Arab nations with the same language and ethnicity. Unfortunately, these Arab nations did not welcome their brethren, choosing instead to put them into refugee camps where many remain to this day.

Israel’s Proclamation of Independence, issued May 14, 1948, invited the Arab inhabitants of the Land to remain in their homes and become equal citizens in the new state. The 160,000 Arabs who remained in Israel kept their homes and properties and are today Israeli citizens who enjoy the freedoms and opportunities afforded them by the region’s one and only democratic country. There are some 1.7 million Arab citizens of Israel.

Meanwhile, in the wake of their defeat in 1948, the Arab states forcibly expelled more than 800,000 Jewish citizens and stripped them of all their property—constituting a much larger theft of land and belongings and a larger refugee problem than that claimed by the Palestinians. While Israel absorbed these Jewish refugees, the Arab countries did not absorb the Palestinian Arab refugees.

Summary
Hence, it is true that Arabs lost their residences by vacating them in 1948 only to realize they were unable to return once the fighting stopped. It is also true that some Arab individuals have lost their homes due to Israeli military or security measures. And while any legitimate grievance should be recognized and compensated, the problem is small compared to the large amounts of land Israel obtained legally and the number of Jews who lost their properties in Arab lands. Therefore, it in no way calls into question the legitimacy of the Jewish State.

Susan Michael is the USA Director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and creator of the IsraelAnswers.com website.
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