ISRAEL’S NEW GOVERNMENT
AND THE ANNEXATION PUZZLE
Dear Friends,

Six months into 2020 and the world is an entirely different landscape than when the year began. However, amid closed borders, lockdowns, and social distancing, one door in Israel has remained open—the door of Aliyah!

Jews are still coming home to Israel from the nations. Once again, Christians worldwide are playing a role in this prophetic fulfillment through the work of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. Since Israel first imposed coronavirus travel bans in February, the ICEJ has sponsored Aliyah flights for 855 new Jewish immigrants.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was also able to form a government, primarily due to his strong show of leadership during the coronavirus crisis forcing his opponent to give up dreams of victory and forge an agreement for joint governance. Netanyahu can now make good on campaign promises to annex the settlement communities in the West Bank.

“When we win, we will continue making history,” Netanyahu said. “When we win, we will extend sovereignty over all the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria.” Thanks to the Trump peace plan, Israel can now annex the settlements in the West Bank with American approval. This move will undoubtedly stir up Israel’s antagonists, but many of them have given up on the decades-long peace process producing anything other than annexation anyway.

2020 has been a historic year, and we believe the Feast of Tabernacles will be just as exciting. Please pray for us as we navigate the coronavirus restrictions and travel disruptions. The Feast will go on, and we invite you to join us.

Yours in Christ,

Dr Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ President

P.S. Please contact the US branch and plan to join us for the Feast of Tabernacles in October. As of now, we are moving ahead with our Feast plans and look forward to seeing you during Sukkot.
A fter three elections and seventeen months of political deadlock, it was a relief for most Israelis when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and rival Benny Gantz finally agreed on a deal to form a unity government. The political stalemate was actually broken by the coronavirus crisis, when Netanyahu took firm command of the nation’s battle against an “unseen enemy” and even counseled other national leaders on how to deal with the global health menace. Polls instantly gave him a decisive boost in the event of a looming fourth election, convincing Gantz to break away from his most anti-Bibi partners and team up with Netanyahu.

The coalition agreement hinges around a rotation formula between the two rivals, and even though there are still many hurdles to overcome before the new government can be sworn in, the logjam does appear to be broken.

Yet the broad coalition will instantly face some steep challenges, such as ending the coronavirus lockdowns, reviving a shuttered economy, and deciding whether to annex parts of Judea/Samaria under the favorable terms of the Trump peace plan. The annexation quandary could prove especially thorny for several reasons.

To begin, the national religious camp has been pressuring Netanyahu to forge ahead with his recent campaign promise to annex the Jordan Valley plus the larger settlement blocs. Some contend it is especially critical to do so while US President Donald Trump is still in the White House.

But others insist such a move could easily backfire, as Trump may lose his reelection bid come November and the next US president might come down hard on Israel. And even if he wins reelection, annexing lands under Trump’s plan also would require Israel to accept a demilitarized Palestinian state in the rest of the West Bank. Meanwhile, the Palestinians can be expected to oppose any annexation moves vehemently. But perhaps the biggest worry is that annexation of the Jordan Valley could endanger Israel’s peace treaty with Jordan and even destabilize the kingdom due to anger among its Palestinian majority.

No matter how this annexation decision plays out over the coming months, the irony is that history has somehow cornered Israel into an internal debate about annexing lands it already owns. So how did this come about?

Remember San Remo

Among the recent casualties of the coronavirus threat were well-laid plans to celebrate the centennial of the San Remo Conference. This diplomatic conclave took place 100 years ago and served as a monumental moment in the modern-day rebirth of Israel as a nation. It was at San Remo that the international community first recognized the Jewish people’s historical right to reconstitute their national sovereignty in their ancestral homeland—which included what we now call the West Bank.

At the end of World War I, the victorious Allied Powers met with the vanquished German side at the Palace of Versailles in 1919 and agreed on how to redraw the map of Europe. They then gathered a second time the following spring in San Remo to sit with the defeated Turks and divvy up the lands the Ottomans had just lost in the Middle East.

San Remo is a gem of the Italian Riviera. In April, the orange trees begin blossoming and sea breezes carry the sweet scents up the green hillsides. As key world leaders gathered there in late April 1920, it must have provided an intoxicating atmosphere in which to finally unwind from four horrible years of war and two years of the even deadlier Spanish flu pandemic.
When the San Remo delegates did get down to business, the leaders of the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Japan—with American foreknowledge and acquiescence—made some fateful decisions that resonate to this day.

These “Principal Allied Powers” did an unusual thing at San Remo. Rather than claiming lands conquered in war as their own territory, as with most victors before them, they decided to maintain possession of the Ottoman lands and hold the sovereign title in trust for the benefit of the local inhabitants until they were ready to govern themselves. This was accomplished through the novel concept of the mandate system.

In fact, the San Remo conference marks a self-imposed end of the colonial era. The age of empires exploiting the populations and resources of foreign lands for their enrichment was passing. US President Woodrow Wilson was advocating freedom and self-determination for native peoples worldwide. And the European powers responded with the concept of mandates, or trusteeships, to help them develop and mature as free, self-governing nations.

Credit for the mandate concept belongs to Mark Sykes (of the secret Sykes-Picot accord) and more directly to Jan Christiaan Smuts, a quite remarkable figure. He fought against the British as a commander of South African forces in the Second Boer War, only to later serve as a member of the British cabinet. He was the only person to sign both peace treaties ending the First and Second World Wars. Smuts also became a champion of respecting and empowering native peoples, and he had a special affinity for the Jewish people.

In 1919, Smuts had drafted a memorandum setting out the mandate concept, which later became Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. This document, first unveiled at San Remo, specifically mentions Palestine as a mandated territory to be developed into a Jewish state in accordance with the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

At San Remo, the allied powers agreed to apply the mandate system to the vacated Ottoman territories. The British were assigned trusteeships over Palestine (including Transjordan) and “Mesopotamia” (later Iraq), while the French were given guardianship over the areas of today’s Syria and Lebanon.

The mandatory powers were to hold sovereign title in trust for the native peoples and help them progress towards self-rule. And, quite importantly, the Jewish people were recognized as indigenous to Palestine to the same degree as the Arab peoples were considered indigenous to Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. Further, the national beneficiaries of the Palestine mandate were deemed to be the entire Jewish people, even those still living in exile.

These decisions were encapsulated in the San Remo resolutions, and two years later, they were affirmed by the League of Nations when approving the British and French mandates in the region.

So the British recognized the preexisting right and claim of the Jewish people to the historic Land of Israel in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which was then endorsed by other leading world powers at San Remo in 1920 and finally affirmed by the broader League of Nations in 1922. The United States promptly endorsed Britain’s Mandate in Palestine, both in a joint act of Congress in 1922 and in a treaty with Great Britain two years later, and pledged to be a guarantor of its provisions, which included the obligation to encourage “close settlement of Jews on the land.”

Nothing since has nullified the Jewish right and title to the entire land west of the Jordan River—not the UN Partition Plan of 1947, which was rejected by the Arabs, and not even the Oslo accords. (Although it certainly helps when Israel asserts more vigorously its title to Judea/Samaria.)

**As Noble as the Neighbors**

What all this means is that the nation and people of Israel are now considering whether to annex something they already own. The Jewish people may have lost possession of the West Bank during the 19 years it was (illegally) occupied by Jordan, but they never lost their sovereign title to it. The State of Israel came back into possession of these territories in 1967, but the world has been trying to talk them out of it ever since.

Yet those who question or deny Israel’s legal claim to Judea/Samaria need to realize that Israel’s title to this land is as solid as the sovereign claims of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq to their own lands. The reason is that they all can be traced back to a “common grantor.”

Under this legal principle, the source and quality of one man’s title to a piece of land is considered to be as good as his neighbor’s if they can both trace title back to the same grantor in the same basic transaction. In this case, Israel can trace its claim of ownership to Judea/Samaria back to the same decision-makers, meeting at the same San Remo conference and relying on the very same principles of international law, that created the sovereign states of Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

So if Damascus is truly Syrian, if the Lebanese belong in Beirut, and the Iraqi people own the land between the two rivers, then the Jewish people have every right to lay claim to the Jordan Valley as their home.
We had just read this verse from the book of Esther during Purim in early March when the coronavirus first broke out in Israel. The words kept resonating in our spirits, as we sensed that God indeed had called us “for such a time as this.”

Before it even became an official health rule, we already decided to restrict ourselves to our homes and workplace and not to visit any public areas, including shops and malls. Soon after, the elderly residents of the Haifa Home were required to stay inside their apartments. They could not even come to the community dining hall for meals together. But because of our timely decision to self-quarantine, we were the only ones in a position to take on the daily care of the 70 Holocaust Survivors residing at the Haifa Home during the coronavirus crisis.

“We” are the ICEJ’s team of seven Christian staff and volunteers at the ICEJ’s Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa. Besides me and my husband Will, the team includes a nurse, a physiotherapist, and three young German girls who have volunteered a year of service at the Haifa Home. The German volunteers were being summoned home by their government due to the viral threat, but they insisted on staying to serve those living at the Haifa Home.

“Going back to Germany was never an option,” said Marleen. “I came here to help the Holocaust Survivors, especially during these difficult times.”

Every day, our team puts on medical masks and gloves and visits each resident in their apartments. We sit with them, bring food, provide nursing care and physio exercise, do handiwork around their apartment, and solve their needs. It has been a time of building deeper trust and love with each one of them. The companionship is more precious to them than we may realize. It has been a real privilege to serve them in this way!

Several times each week, we have checked their temperatures and blood pressure. We are grateful to report that every one of these dear Holocaust Survivors have been kept safe from the virus and are in relatively good health for their age.

“The past few weeks have been really special and satisfying,” said Deborah, our volunteer physiotherapist. “I felt fortunate to be here at this unusual time and help them as much as I can.”

A Different Passover Celebration
A traditional song at the Passover seder asks: “Why is this night different from other nights?” Besides the eating of unleavened bread noted in the song, this year also was different because all of Israel celebrated the Pesach Seder meal in isolation at home, without any extended family. Passover is usually a large family event, so this was not easy, especially for the elderly.

Usually, some of our residents join their children and grandchildren, while the rest gather in the Home’s dining room for a community seder. This year, however, they all had to stay in their apartments. To make it special for them, we went room by room and brought everyone gifts and a festive meal and sang some of their favorite Passover songs.
Isolation Brings Back Memories
For some Holocaust Survivors, especially those slowly developing dementia or Alzheimer’s, the time spent alone in their rooms is bringing back bad memories of the war years. Whenever we visit 98-year-old Miriam, she immediately takes you back to her horrific youth in ghettos and Nazi camps, ending with Auschwitz. Even when we try to change the subject, she has trouble leaving that dark time behind. But a Finnish Christian couple thought to send a therapeutic doll. Our volunteer, Kerstin, has used this “baby” with Miriam to help her have some fun and laughter.

Repairs Big and Small
Every day, we knock on the residents’ doors and enter for a chat, some exercise, and a cup of coffee, plus tend to whatever they need for that day. One Shabbat, we found 94-year-old Shlomo laying on his bed with a winter hat on his head. He was freezing, as his heater had stopped working. Will immediately fetched a ladder and fixed his heating system. After some chocolates and a talk, we left Shlomo warm and happy again.

On another occasion, one of our volunteers found that Shlomo could not get his blood pressure meter going. It needed new batteries and was fixed in minutes. “God sent you today to help me,” Shlomo said gratefully.

Cleaning and Laundry
Besides other duties, our German volunteers Kerstin and Marleen spend time cleaning apartments and keeping residents happy. Even simple tasks like folding laundry have become fun when the residents help out. And the commitment of the Christian volunteers has left a deep impression on many of the Holocaust Survivors.

“Before the coronavirus, we used to play cards every night. We had dances and gymnastics, but now we have to sit alone in our houses,” said Naomi, an 86-year-old Survivor from Romania. “These girls come in with a mask and gloves, sit a few feet away, and we have good talks. They tell me, ‘I love you like my grandmother.’”

Home Deliveries around Haifa
Meantime, the ICEJ team also helped our local charitable partner to deliver boxes of food to hundreds of other Holocaust Survivors and elderly confined to their homes throughout the Haifa area. The front door deliveries were greatly appreciated. One Holocaust Survivor remarked: “I didn’t have bread for two weeks. That hasn’t happened since I was in Auschwitz.”

Helping While We Still Can!
Time is running out. There are many Holocaust Survivors waiting to find a loving home and community like the Haifa Home. With no government funding, our assisted-living Home is completely dependent on donors such as you! The coronavirus threat has made our work there even more challenging. With the growing needs of the ever-aging residents, we need your help!

Please give generously and show your love for these dear Holocaust Survivors.

Give Today at: www.icejusa.org/haifa
The hairdressers and barbers have been closed quite a while now. So what do you do if you desperately need a haircut?

One of our residents, 92-year-old Fanny, was a hairdresser in Israel for about 50 years.

Fanny was born in Casablanca, Morocco. When the war broke out in Morocco, children were not allowed to go to school anymore. Many Jewish people were put into ghettos, where no doctors were allowed to help and where people had hardly anything to eat. Fanny vividly remembers the bombardments in their street that killed many Jewish people. She will also never forget the sickness and hunger. In 1948, she and her family started the long journey to their new homeland, Israel.

Fanny was happy to offer her services and gave our volunteer, Eli, a wonderful new look. Cutting with the scissors she once used many years ago, and without glasses, she tackled the job with great confidence.

Masks have become part of our outfit. In Israel, you will be fined if you do not wear one when you leave your house.

Chaya designed her own mask. She took an A4 sheet, put a plastic hairband in it, and sewed it tight to make an effective mask that protects her entire face. Jenny, Ya’akov’s caregiver, made him different masks from old t-shirts and started matching the colors with his shirts. He looks very fashionable!

While all of Israel had to celebrate the 72 years of Statehood and Independence at home, we visited our residents and shared in their joy by singing songs together and talking about their experiences and wishes for Israel.

Here are some of their wishes and hopes for their land:

Fanny A.: “I want that all the Jewish people love one another and that we have it good together. We have only one country, not another one.”

Fanny S.: “That there will be peace already for Israel.”

Rita: “I so wish that [the] coronavirus will leave us very soon and that we will find a vaccine quickly. That we will continue to be a free people in a free country . . . ”

Motke: “I wish for peace and health for all of Israel and blessings to the IDF who protect us. May we have less arguments together and agree more as a people.”

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On Tuesday, April 21, at 10:00 a.m., a ceremony took place at the Haifa Home to honor Holocaust Memorial Day. Instead of a street full of Survivors, family, police, and soldiers, this time the ceremony was held according to the regulations of the Ministry of Health with few residents and attendees.

Holocaust Memorial Day is always a hard day for our residents, and the older they become, the more difficult it gets. Their memories become more distinct and vivid with age and bring some of them to a state of depression.

After the introduction and the lighting of the remembrance flame by Shalom Stamberg (97) and Miriam Linial (98), both Survivors of Auschwitz, the moving prayer “El HaRachamim” was sung, and 94-year-old Shlomo Shertzer recited the prayer of mourning.

Yudit Setz stood on behalf of the thousands of ICEJ supporters and spoke to the heart of the residents when she shared:

Dear Holocaust Survivors, for you this is such a difficult day, and I embrace you with a warm and huge embrace in the name of thousands of Christians who admire you, who think about you, and who pray for you at this time. I have the great privilege of seeing you almost every day, and you have taught me so many things: how to never give up, regardless the difficult circumstances; to live with hope amid the biggest storm, knowing that one day the sun will shine again; to love instead of hate . . .”

We have a moral duty not only to remember but also to take care of those who survived and are still with us today—to let them live out their lives in dignity, respect, and love. We will continue to do so with God’s help.

Bless Holocaust Survivors today at: www.icejusa.org/haifa
Since 1996, ICEJ Homecare has provided nursing assistance, physical care, and emotional support to many elderly and disabled Russian immigrants in Israel. But due to the coronavirus pandemic, the families we visit and help on a weekly basis, most of them elderly, had to remain in their homes and were not allowed to have visitors. This was very difficult, as they eagerly await the visits of Corrie van Maanen of ICEJ Homecare each week. She has built relationships and trust with them over the years, and we have become family for them.

In this time of crisis, Corrie tried from the beginning to adjust to the circumstances, seeing their needs and stepping in to help as she was able. The feeling of being “locked” in their homes has taken a toll, especially on the oldest ones. Most of them suffered in the Second World War, and those memories can return in their fullness, which reinforces their sense of aloneness.

As Zacharia, aged 94, described it, “The loneliness of the isolation is worse than the fear of getting infected.”

“In such a situation, we want to stay close to them,” Corrie explained in response. “We don’t want to let them out of our sight, and we want to continue to see to their needs.”

Ahead of the Passover holiday, ICEJ Homecare has a special outreach every year for a group of Russian Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust. The Jewish feasts are always a particularly good opportunity to bring comfort and blessing for these dear elderly ones. Homecare prepared a nice holiday packet with matza, tea, chocolate, and other goodies, as well as a card with a word of encouragement. When they read the card, many express their thankfulness, saying: “We are not alone.”

In addition, we packed and delivered Passover holiday food and care packages for the people in Corrie’s care. She has continued to visit them and stay in touch by phone to encourage them and look after their emotional needs. She also continues to care for their ongoing basic needs by bringing groceries and medicine to their door as needed.

Corrie has called this the time of her “stairwell ministry,” as she is not able to enter their apartments but often sits on the stairs as they talk to her from their open doorways only a few feet away. When Tanya opened the door recently, she was eager to talk to Corrie. In tears, she told her that this time of isolation gave her such a fear of going hungry again, just as she had experienced as a small child growing up in wartime Ukraine. Since this virus emerged, Tanya has not seen her grandchildren. Her days are long and full of loneliness. Homecare visits have become a lifeline for her in these challenging days.

“When the storm is hitting hard, like this virus, then our visits and relationships with these people become very meaningful,” said Corrie. “It’s such a blessing to be [available] in a time like this, when the staff of the Christian Embassy can reach out to them with hope and with assurance that the God of Israel is faithful to care for His people in these days.”

To be a blessing to elderly and disabled Israelis, support
ICEJ HOMECARE AT: icejusa.org/homecare
Arab Christian helps Jews celebrate Passover amid coronavirus crisis

Mayor of Jewish town shocked to receive call from Israel-loving Arab Christians

BY DAVID LAZARUS, ISRAEL TODAY

An Arab Christian from Nazareth organized his church to deliver food packets to elderly and needy families during the coronavirus lockdown. What surprised the local mayor was when the church also delivered crates of matzot to ensure Jewish families could properly celebrate Passover.

Israel Today spoke with Salim, the Arab pastor who loves Israel and the Jewish people:

“When I called Mayor Ronen Plot at 7:30 in the morning, he was just as surprised as I was that he answered the phone,” Salim said. Mayor Plot of Nof HaGalil, the Jewish community of Upper Nazareth, was shocked to hear that an Arab was interested in helping Jewish families. Even more unheard of was the fact that Pastor Salim’s church wanted to help the mayor’s Jewish residents celebrate Passover during this challenging time.

“We are bringing cases of food goods, unleavened bread, and wine for our Jewish neighbors to celebrate the holiday,” the Arab pastor told Mayor Plot. “When I told the mayor about our plans, he wanted to meet me personally to learn more about our church community,” Salim said.

The pastor explained to the mayor that his church loves the Jewish people. “I used to hate the Jews,” Salim explained. “They crucified my Savior!” he said. Salim went on to explain how his faith in the Jewish Messiah changed him and taught him to love the Jews. He now sees the Jewish people as his “older brother.”

In addition to his humanitarian aid for the coronavirus-stricken Galilee community in Nazareth where he was born, Salim also volunteers for his local police department. Salim has given his testimony to a group of US senators at the White House.

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The ICEJ is proud to partner with Pastor Salim who speaks at ICEJ conferences in Israel and around the world. May God bless him, his family, and church for their bold love for the people of Israel.
Israel’s third election season in the past year started out fairly blasé but was jolted awake in late January when US President Donald Trump invited caretaker Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Washington to unveil his long-awaited plan for a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

After teasing us with his “Deal of the Century” for over two years, Trump released it amid a close election campaign. The move certainly felt like election interference, but you did not hear many Israelis complaining. By inviting both Netanyahu and his main rival, Benny Gantz, to Washington to discuss his “Vision” for peace, it appears Trump sought to give Likud and Blue & White something around which they could coalesce in a unity government after the elections—finally delivering Israel from its prolonged political impasse. Netanyahu’s legal troubles will still be a major obstacle to that end, but the national ballot on March 2 suddenly became all about the Trump peace plan.

Trump’s plan is quite lengthy and complex, and it quickly emerged that Washington and Jerusalem had different understandings on the terms and timing of some of its main provisions, especially regarding “immediate” annexation of settlement areas.

The exact legal nature of the proposal is also still unclear. Normally, the United States or another mediator has offered a suggested outline for resolving the core issues, which Israel and the Palestinians are then invited to hammer out in a final agreement through direct negotiations. But this appears to be more of an adhesion contract—meaning, “take it or leave it.”

For instance, plan architects Jared Kushner and David Friedman quickly chastened Israeli leaders for prematurely seeking to trigger the annexation mechanism, seeming to suggest they consider the deal to be set in stone, with the US team already installed as judges of compliance. On the other hand, when the Palestinians promptly rejected the plan, as expected, Trump’s team urged them to come to the table and negotiate a final peace accord based on the American proposal.

Nevertheless, my initial reaction to the plan is one of cautious receptiveness. This is especially so as the plan continues to demonstrate that President Trump is a great friend of Israel, in line with his earlier landmark decisions on Jerusalem, the Golan, and the legality of the settlements.

The plan contains numerous elements that would be beneficial to Israel, such as full sovereignty over Jerusalem and full security control from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, plus all air space above. There would be no mass return of Palestinian refugees to Israel. No Israeli settlements would be uprooted. It also dramatically reverses the trend of recent decades whereby the international community has slowly eroded away Israel’s rights and positions without requiring any Palestinian
concessions. In addition, it truly tests—for the first time in the history of the Mideast peace process—the real intentions of the Palestinian leadership and appears to penalize them for rejecting peace with Israel.

However, if the Trump plan plays out as currently written, it would require Israel to permanently cede its claim to 70 percent of the West Bank (Judea/Samaria) for a Palestinian state, essentially dividing the Land, which is contrary to Scripture. It also holds out the possibility of statehood to a corrupt Palestinian leadership that remains firmly entrenched in its rejection of Israel and continues to squander the hopes and future of the Palestinian people.

Still, the plan has its merits and deserves Israel's consideration.

Reversing the Trend
Ever since the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991, the international community has been slowly but steadily trying to force Israel back to the pre-1967 lines in order to create a Palestinian state. The Oslo process culminated at Camp David in July 2000 with Ehud Barak’s offer to cede 92 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians. After his talks with PLO chief Yasser Arafat collapsed, some of Barak’s peace team continued the talks at Taba in early 2001 and sweetened the offer to 95 percent of the West Bank. Around the same time, outgoing US President Bill Clinton set forth his suggested parameters for peace, which called for negotiations based on the pre-67 lines, with minor land swaps, so Israel could retain the “consensus” settlement blocs. Eventually, Ehud Olmert upped the Israeli offer to a reported 97 percent of the West Bank.

The Palestinians rejected these generous offers every time and refused to even table a counteroffer, believing all the time that the international community would eventually deliver them 100 percent of the territory without having to formally end the conflict with Israel. This slow march back to what Abba Eban once described as the “borders of Auschwitz” culminated in UN Security Council resolution 2334, passed in December 2016, which declared that all the West Bank and East Jerusalem were “occupied Palestinian territory.”

But that reckless trend is now reversed, as Trump’s plan would only give the Palestinians up to 70 percent of the West Bank and outlying slivers of eastern Jerusalem for a Palestinian state. So, in that sense, it is a welcome turnaround from what Israelis refer to as the “salami process”: world powers slowly slicing away their rights and positions.

Still, there are risks in the plan for Israel. It would provide US backing for Israel to immediately annex up to 30 percent of the West Bank where the majority of Jewish settlements are located, including the entire Jordan Valley. But doing so would lock Israel into a negotiating process that could lead to a Palestinian state. US recognition of Israel’s claims to the annexed areas would be conditioned on a four-year freeze of Israeli construction in some 15 isolated settlements inside the areas designated for a future Palestinian state, and Israel would be required to negotiate the terms of statehood with the Palestinians along the lines of the US plan.

Testing Palestinian Intentions
The Palestinians also would have a long list of limitations, requirements, and conditions in order to receive American recognition of their statehood several years down the road. The Palestinian state would have no army, no security control of their borders or air space, and no right to form mutual defense pacts with Iran or other enemies of Israel. They also would have to end incitement against Israel, as well as “pay-for-slay” welfare benefits to families of jailed or dead terrorists. Perhaps the biggest test of whether the Palestinians truly want peace is the requirement that the Palestinian Authority disarm Hamas. Given that Hamas will never voluntarily lay down their arms, this would require the PA to launch a bitter civil war among the Palestinians to meet the Trump requirements for statehood. That is an enormously high, even unrealistic threshold for the Palestinians to achieve.

There are other problems with the Trump plan. For instance, Trump seems to have limited coattails when it comes to other nations following his lead. Only a handful of nations are ascending to Jerusalem with their embassies like the United States, and no one has endorsed his recognition of the Golan as sovereign Israeli territory. I do believe more countries will follow Trump’s lead on these issues if he gets reelected, but he first needs to win a second term. Otherwise, the plan is dead in the water.

I do not expect the Palestinians to buy into this plan, but instead, they will wait out Trump’s fate come the US presidential elections in November. Yet the plan’s architects seem to have anticipated as much, and I believe they already have a tacit understanding with Israeli leaders on how the Palestinians will be made to pay for continuing to reject peace with Israel. Even so, we also can expect a number of world leaders to come to their rescue—starting with the European Union and Russia.

Meanwhile, Israeli leaders will need to utilize the Trump plan to solidify their hold on as much of the disputed territories as possible, even if it never gets fully implemented. Trump’s team appears to have designed the plan to provide for this contingency, and thus we can confidently say it is the most pro-Israel peace plan ever offered since Israel’s capture of these areas in June 1967.
Greetings to everyone who is watching this broadcast today. I want to use this virtual opportunity to thank Israel’s many Christian friends for the tremendous support you give our country—day in and day out, year in and year out.

I’ve said it before, and I’ll say it again: The backbone of Israel’s support in the world is the support of the United States of America. And the backbone of that backbone is the unequivocal support for Israel of tens of millions of devout Christians throughout this great country.

That unequivocal support has helped enable a great transformation in the relationship between Christians and Jews. For many centuries, our relationship was marked largely by enmity and suspicion. It was often fueled by anti-Semitism. But in the past few decades, thanks to the dedicated efforts of many of you, that relationship has turned into a friendship.

And in recent years, that friendship has blossomed into a partnership. We see that partnership in the fight against anti-Semitism today, including the anti-Semitic BDS movement, which seeks to single out Israel for boycott, divestment, and sanctions.

We saw that partnership in confronting the nuclear deal with Iran that posed a threat to the very survival of Israel and in encouraging President Trump to withdraw from that dangerous deal and restore sanctions against Iran, the world’s foremost sponsor of terror. Today is the two-year anniversary of that decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal, and Israel deeply appreciates all the Trump
administration has done to confront Iran, a regime that vows and works to destroy Israel.

We also saw the partnership with our Christian friends when together we celebrated the historic decision of President Trump to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and move the American Embassy there. And I have no doubt that we will see this partnership in the weeks and months ahead as we work with the Trump administration to advance a realistic and durable peace between Israel and all our Arab neighbors, including the Palestinians.

For many years, peace plans have been put forward that would endanger Israel. In January, President Trump put forward a peace plan that would protect Israel.

Other plans called for Israel to effectively withdraw to the indefensible 1967 borders. The Trump plan rejects those borders, calling for a solution in which Israel retains control of areas vital for our defense, including the Jordan Valley.

Other plans called for Israel to rely on others for our security, whether Palestinian security forces or international forces. The Trump plan is premised on the idea that Israel will always defend itself, by itself.

Other plans called for Israel to uproot tens of thousands of Jews from their homes in Judea and Samaria. The Trump plan does not call for anyone—Jew or Arab—to be uprooted and calls for Israel to retain sovereignty over all the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria.

Other plans enable the Palestinians to cling to the dangerous fantasy that Israel will one day be flooded by the descendants of Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war that was launched by the Arab states against Israel. The Trump plan makes it clear that the Palestinian refugee problem must be resolved outside of Israel.

Other plans called for Jerusalem to be divided, and for the Temple Mount, the holiest site of the Jewish people, as well as Christian holy sites throughout Jerusalem, to be transferred to the Palestinians. The Trump plan leaves the Jewish people’s ancient capital united under Israel’s sovereignty, safeguards Christian holy sites, and leaves the status quo on the Temple Mount unchanged.

Perhaps most important, other plans were founded on a Great Lie. They treated the Jewish people as if we are foreign colonialists in the Land of Israel, as if we are occupiers in our own homeland. The Trump plan recognizes that the Jews are the people of Judea. It recognizes that the Jewish people are in the Land of Israel not just by might but by right.

President Trump put forward a peace plan that we will see this partnership in the weeks and months ahead as we work with the Trump administration to advance a realistic and durable peace between Israel and all our Arab neighbors, including the Palestinians.

As Prime Minister Netanyahu said in Washington in January, Israel is committed to negotiating a peace agreement based on President Trump’s vision. As I speak to you, a joint US-Israel mapping committee is finishing up its work. The conceptual map presented by President Trump in January is being turned into an actual map that reflects his Vision of Peace.

Once this work is completed, Israel will apply its laws to all the territories designated in President Trump’s vision as being part of Israel in the future. At the same time, Israel will commit to not changing the status quo for at least the next four years in territories that President Trump’s vision designates as being Palestinian in the future.

President Trump has made clear that following Israel’s decision, the United States will recognize Israeli sovereignty in those areas to which we will apply our Israel laws. That will be one small step for peace and one giant leap for Zionism.

It will anchor Israel’s vital national and security interests and leave open the door to a durable peace with the Palestinians in the future.

Our hope is that the Palestinians will ultimately walk through that door. Our hope is that the Palestinians will finally abandon their 100-year war against the Jewish state and instead decide to live in peace alongside the State of Israel—a peace that will provide them with a future of dignity and prosperity.

Our hope is that Arab states in the region will also embrace President Trump’s vision—a vision that provides a pathway to a Palestinian state—and move forward on a path of reconciliation and peace with Israel. But regardless of whether the Palestinians choose the path of peace, Israel intends to move forward and continue to strengthen our country—militarily, economically, technologically, diplomatically, and yes, spiritually.

I have no doubt that as we do, Israel’s millions of Christian friends throughout America will be right there by our side.

Thank you all for your constant prayers. Thank you for your unequivocal support.

May God bless you. May God bless America. And may God bless the great friendship between our two countries. ☺️
Join the ISAIAH 62 INITIATIVE

I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem;
They shall never hold their peace day or night.
You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent,
And give Him no rest till He establishes
And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

— ISAIAH 62:6-7

ISAIAH 62 INITIATIVE

Join intercessors across the United States
and some 132 countries who receive the ICEJ’s monthly prayer points, and pray
individually or corporately for Israel, the Middle East, and the unique ministry of the
ICEJ. Just as the prophet spoke in Isaiah 62,
the Lord has placed the mantle upon His
followers to pray for Jerusalem.

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Now what the Danish Bible Society has sought to accomplish, they easily could have done in column or foot notes alongside the Bible text, which has become the accepted practice in the field of Bible translation. But here, the sacred was changed in order to protect shifting secular beliefs. It is one thing to seek to interpret biblical passages in a way that divests the Jewish people of their unique place in Scripture or their irrevocable heritage in the Land of Israel—a grave mistake that many Christians have been making for centuries now—but to translate actual passages of the Bible by erasing key references to Israel in this way is an even greater travesty.

How could you rob God of His identity, seeing that He repeatedly describes Himself in Scripture as the “God of Israel”? (See e.g., Exodus 5:1; 2 Samuel 12:7; Psalm 72:18; Isaiah 45:3; Jeremiah 31:23; Ezekiel 44:2; Malachi 2:16; Matthew 15:31; Luke 1:68; Acts 13:17).

The Danish Bible Society contends that these changes were necessary so that ordinary Danes will not mistakenly connect biblical Israel with modern Israel. However, this can never justify such an assault on the integrity of the Holy Scriptures and their eternal truths.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, first of all, upholds the Holy Scriptures as inviolable—you can never change their original, essential meaning. Second, we maintain it is impossible to remove the nation and people of Israel from their central role in God’s redemptive plan for all humanity, as is so consistently affirmed throughout the Hebrew and Greek Bibles. The land and people of Israel both remain elect of God and inseparable; otherwise, the divine promises of Israel’s restoration would become of no effect.

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The international network of Bible Societies around the world have long been widely respected within the Christian world for their noble mission of making the Word of God available to all peoples and nations in their languages. But the Danish Bible Society has now brought disgrace upon its own chapter of this revered association by its disturbing and unacceptable actions.
The Trump administration unveiled the long-awaited peace plan between Israel and the Palestinian people in January 2020. Perhaps the most realistic and balanced of any peace plan to date, it was rejected by the Palestinian Authority in less than two hours.

One of the most controversial pieces of the so-called “Deal of the Century” included the annexation of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, recognizing the land as part of the State of Israel. Thus the quagmire brings old questions to light regarding the legality of the settlements and Israel’s right to annex them.

Biblical Foundation
The book of Genesis records God’s promise of the land of Canaan as an “everlasting possession” to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob. Several hundred years later, the law was given at Sinai, and one of the conditions of disobedience would be exile from that land—however, exile with the hope of return. After centuries of exile, the Jewish people saw that hope realized and returned to reestablish sovereignty in their God-given land in 1948.

International Legal Foundation
The ancient land of Canaan, referred to as Judea under Roman occupation, had been renamed Palestine in AD 135 and then occupied by one foreign entity after another until the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in WWI. Leaders of the Allied nations and their German counterparts divided up the Empire, not for occupation but to set up self-rule.

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 supporting the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine was endorsed by the leading world powers at the San Remo Conference in 1920 and affirmed by the League of Nations in 1922. Israel had a right to the land just as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq—all created out of the same legal agreements—had rights to theirs. This legal foundation has not been annulled and is still in place today.

The Defunct UN Partition Plan
After 25 years of conflict between the Jews and Arabs living in the land, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 181 in 1947, calling for the partition of the land and the establishment of both a Jewish State and an Arab State. The Jews immediately accepted the plan and established their state, but the Arab world rejected it and instead attacked the newborn Jewish State in an attempt to take all of the land. The UN Partition Plan was never implemented because the Arabs had rejected it just as they have rejected numerous other offers of statehood.

The Failed Peace Process
Since the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991, various initiatives and peace plans have offered more and more to the Palestinians and seemed to validate the claims by Israel’s antagonists that the Jews were giving back illegally occupied land owned by the Palestinians. But Israel’s willingness to negotiate and possibly even give away land did not mean the international legal claims to the land were now not applicable. Instead, Israel was negotiating with the land that rightfully belonged to her to obtain a peace agreement.

Palestinian Obstinence
The increasingly generous offers of various peace initiatives under four US Presidents since 1991 were all rejected by the Palestinian leaders who seemed to be holding out for a better deal. What Western negotiators failed to recognize was Palestinian rejection is not about the details of any one offer but a refusal to sign an agreement with the Jewish State.

Signing an agreement with Israel means recognizing Israel exists, and that would be a betrayal of the Palestinian dream of return to all the land from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. It would also be a betrayal of the Islamic world that refuses to accept Jewish sovereignty on land that was once Islamic. Thirty years of Palestinian obstinence has created facts on the ground that need resolving, such as that of the Jewish communities in the West Bank.

Time to Annex the Settlements
Israel’s annexation of the settlements as allowed by the Trump peace plan is entirely legal. It recognizes the rulings of the San Remo Conference and League of Nations some 100 years ago. It should also be a wake-up call to Palestinian leaders that their continued rejection of peace agreements with Israel will mean less for them in the end—not more.

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