PROTECTING ISRAELIS:
Futureproofing Communities

ISRAEL’S CONCERN
Iran and Russia in Syria
Dear Friends,

Israeli leaders have been watching the civil war in Syria with great concern, and even though the war is winding down those concerns remain. Both Russia and Iran have emerged the winners in Syria along with the Assad regime, and Israel is most concerned about Iran's two-pronged strategy coming out of this victory. Another danger is Hezbollah's return to Lebanon to once again focus its efforts on Israel.

The ICEJ prays for peace and certainly hopes for the best, but senses the importance of helping protect Israeli communities from future attacks. We continue to raise funds to purchase portable bomb shelters for vulnerable communities.

In the meantime, we are also saddened by the shortage of time to care for Holocaust survivors. Over the last few months we have lost a number of residents at the Haifa Home for Holocaust survivors. While many more are waiting to get in, we are very aware of the limited time we have to love on these precious ones who suffered so greatly and need special care in their later years.

Your partnership with the ICEJ means that together we can bless the people of Israel with our prayers, love, and care. Bless you and your family for all you do for Him and His people.

Yours in Christ,

Dr Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ President

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was established in 1980 in recognition of the biblical significance of all of Jerusalem and its unique connection to the Jewish people. Today the ICEJ represents millions of Christians, churches, and denominations to the nation and people of Israel. We recognize in the restoration of Israel the faithfulness of God to keep His ancient covenant with the Jewish people. Our main objectives are:

- To stand with Israel in support and friendship;
- To equip and teach the worldwide church regarding God’s purposes with Israel and the nations of the Middle East;
- To be an active voice of reconciliation between Jews, Christians, and Arabs; and to support the churches and congregations in the Holy Land.

From its head offices in Jerusalem, the ICEJ reaches out into more than 170 countries worldwide, with branch offices in over 90 nations.

Our vision is:

- To reach every segment of Israel’s society with a Christian testimony of comfort and love, and
- To reach and actively represent to Israel the support of denominations, churches, and believers from every nation on earth.

The Christian Embassy is a non-denominational faith-based ministry supported by the voluntary contributions of our partners and friends across the globe. We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by donating to the ongoing work and witness of the ICEJ.

The New King James Bible is used for all Bible references unless otherwise noted.

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IDF Soldier on the Golan Heights (Flickr)

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The brutal civil war which erupted in Syria in 2011 has now claimed nearly 600,000 lives, with another two million wounded and twelve million displaced from their homes. According to the United Nations, it marks the greatest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. There are signs, however, that the conflict is waning and has largely been decided in favor of the Assad regime and its allies Russia and Iran. Such an Iranian victory will have serious and widespread ramifications for the entire region, most pointedly for neighboring Israel.

Background to Bedlam
The Syria conflict was ignited six years ago as the turmoil of the “Arab Spring” swept through the Middle East. Sunni Arabs, a majority of Syria’s population, rebelled against the oppressive Alawite minority regime which had ruled the country for decades. But the conflict quickly expanded into a complicated proxy war fueled by multiple outside players and a major rekindling of the ancient Sunni-Shi’ite rift.

The United States, joined by Saudi Arabia and Turkey, backed a coalition of moderate Sunni militias battling the Assad loyalists. Meanwhile, Russia aligned with Iran and its Lebanese Shi’ite proxy Hezbollah to help keep the Assad regime—a longtime client—in power. Yet a third major antagonist soon emerged, as the conflict also drew tens of thousands of radical Sunni jihadists recruited by the Islamic State to come fight for their newly declared caliphate in eastern Syria and western Iraq.
As the carnage escalated and casualties mounted, a key turning point came when Assad forces used chemical weapons against Sunni rebels and the United States failed to intervene, as promised. Russia interpreted this as American weakness and placed its own ground troops inside Syria, a move that guaranteed the survival of the Assad dictatorship and allowed Iran to expand its own foothold in the war-torn country.

**The Real Winners**

Most analysts now say Russia and Iran have effectively won the war in Syria. This does not mean their ally, the Assad regime, will fully regain control over all of Syria any time soon. But it does mean Russia is calling the shots during the current de-escalation phase, while Iran has been able to establish a strong military presence inside Syria that will be difficult to dislodge. Besides thousands of Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah troops, there also are scores of radical Shi'ite militiamen from a host of Muslim nations now entrenched in Syria.

Using these foreign forces, Tehran now hopes to open a “land bridge” directly linking Iran with Hezbollah in Lebanon via a narrow corridor running through eastern Syria into Iraq, whose government in Baghdad is already under their sway. This contiguous “Shi'ite Crescent” would give Iran greater hegemony over the region, and the ability to open new fronts against Israel right on its borders. The added threat of an Iranian nuclear capability would give Tehran an even larger advantage over its Sunni Arab rivals and greatly imperil the Jewish state.

**Iran’s Two-Pronged Strategy**

Addressing these concerns recently, MK Avi Dichter, a leading Israeli intelligence maven, warned that Iran actually has a two-pronged strategy for dominating the Middle East, with the northern front aimed at confronting Israel and a southern front trained on wrestling control of Mecca and the region’s major oil taps from the Saudis. He explained that while Tehran’s apparent triumph in Syria has placed pro-Iranian forces on Israel’s borders, advances along the southern corridor are going largely unnoticed and unchallenged.

Besides backing the Houthi rebels in the Yemen conflict, Iranian land and naval forces are also being positioned to threaten the main oil shipping routes through the Straits of Hormuz and the even narrower Bab el Mandeb Strait near the Horn of Africa. Even a couple stray rockets could force insurers to halt vital oil shipments through these exposed
passageways to the rest of the world, dealing a huge blow to the global economy.

This has led Saudi Arabia, the Arab Gulf states, and Egypt to form a discreet regional alliance with Israel to check Iranian aggression. They quietly started to close ranks with Jerusalem after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered his speech to the US Congress bluntly warning of the dangers of the pending Iran nuclear deal. By courageously standing up to an American president and calling on Washington to stand behind its traditional allies in the region, Netanyahu earned much respect in key Arab capitals.

The Biggest Losers
Meantime, the biggest losers in the Syrian conflict are the Sunni rebels and the Syrian populace in general, and quite possibly the Kurdish peoples of the region. The Kurds are the largest ethnic group in the world still denied their own state, and they form the majority in the region where the borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey conjoin.

The Kurdish forces in northern Iraq and northeast Syria proved themselves indispensable allies of the West in stopping and then rolling back ISIS over recent years. But the latest move for Kurdish independence from Iraq is now being met with stiff resistance not only by Baghdad but also Iran and Turkey, who fear it could trigger breakaway movements in their own Kurdish provinces. So, the six-year proxy war in Syria and Iraq now looks to be entering a new phase of clashes over Kurdish statehood. Israel is standing alone right now as the only Western democracy supporting Kurdish independence.

A River Run Dry
After six years of bitter fighting, many in Syria have combat fatigue, but it is still too early to call the war totally over. The conflict could smolder for years to come, and easily spill over into Israel or the Kurdish regions, among other scenarios. But the presence in Syria of armed combatants drawn from as many as 70 nations over recent years, along with direct superpower involvement, leaves one wondering if there is indeed something eerily prophetic about this conflict.

Recall that after the Islamic State captured several major dams on the Euphrates in 2014, they threatened to blow them up and flood the Shi’ite neighborhoods of Baghdad downstream. Turkey, in turn, threatened to close its main dam on the Euphrates to dry up the river. This brings to mind the vision of the apostle John in Revelation 16:12, where he sees the great river Euphrates drying up to make way for the “kings of the East,” just as all nations are gathering at Armageddon.

Add to this mix China’s ambitious new initiative called “One Belt, One Road.” Beijing has managed to get dozens of nations to sign on to their grand $900 billion investment plan for building roads, rail lines, ports, and other transportation infrastructure along land and sea routes east and west to make China the future hub of global trade. This includes a superhighway along the old Silk Road which will extend all the way to Turkey and the Mediterranean, crossing the Euphrates in eastern Syria.

Given enough time, the prophetic purposes of God may soon draw the nations back once more to the embattled nation of Syria.
Four thousand rockets over the course of 34 days, driving 500,000 people from their homes—this was the fiery crucible of the 2006 Lebanon War that gave birth to Operation LifeShield. Motivated to meet the need for secure and easily accessible bomb shelters, two Jewish Israeli-American businessmen came up with the idea for providing above-ground bomb shelters. Rabbi Shmuel Bowman joined soon after, and in 2009 became the organization’s executive director.

Beyond Physical Structures – Building Communities
Bowman’s name derives from Bojman, which means “builder.” The impact of Bowman’s efforts goes beyond concrete and reinforced steel, however. He is also building relations with and between Jews, Christians, and Muslims. The mandate and mission of Operation LifeShield is to protect and save all lives in Israel, because every person is created in God’s image. It is for this reason Bowman is an exceptional partner to the ICEJ.

Visionary Approach to Reconciliation
This May, Bowman visited the ICEJ’s German branch, galvanizing his audience with the following visionary words: “Picture this sight: Shelters built by Jews, donated by Christians, delivered to a Bedouin Muslim village! Messiah is on his way!” What makes this seemingly optimistic attitude truly remarkable and profound is Bowman’s own family history. Most of his family on his maternal grandfather’s side perished in the Holocaust. As a grandson of Holocaust survivors, Bowman has made several visits to Germany. Yet his approach to reconciliation is both soothing and sombre, “You cannot sweep history under the rug. It remains too “dark” and the wounds are still too raw. “How can Jews who were not in the Holocaust forgive on behalf of others? And how can young Germans continue to carry the guilt and ask forgiveness on behalf of previous generations?” Despite the lack of a conclusive solution, there is a way forward. Bowman seeks to overcome the ruined past and build the future through forging new relations between disparate communities, both in Israel and abroad.
JOIN THE 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.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

- Join as a group or an individual prayer warrior and receive monthly prayer points.
- Join us in fasting and praying on behalf of Israel every month.

SIGN UP AT
www.icejusa.org/isaiah62

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 He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Isaiah 62:6-7
An ICEJ educational scholarship infused a young Israeli woman with hope. Here is her story and her thanks to our partners.

At age five, Mali's childhood world began to crumble. Her parents' divorce tore the family apart. Both her parents remarried and started new families, leaving Mali and her seven siblings abandoned and relegated to foster homes. Mali ended up in a group home, but as soon as she turned 18, she had to leave the group home with no money, no food, no job, and no understanding of how to live in this world.

The streets became Mali's new home with her bed changing each night as she slept on benches, in bomb shelters, and in stairways of buildings. Sometimes she would spend the night wandering in fear, afraid that something might happen to her if she slept. Mali was constantly hungry and she soon became malnourished, as her food for the day was sometimes only half a sandwich.

After several years of living on the streets, Mali finally decided to call her mom on a pay phone. She wanted to tell her that she was on the streets with no food and no safe place to go. Mali asked her mom if she could go to her house, but to Mali's detriment, her mom hung up on her. Soon Mali ended up in the hospital because her body was severely weakened from starvation.

While in the hospital, Mali's nurse gave her the number of a social worker named Iris. Mali connected with Iris and discovered that the group home Iris ran was full. However, instead of abandoning Mali like Mali's mom had done, Iris showed love and care by taking Mali into her own home. With amazement Mali explains, “She just took me home with her! A strange little girl she didn’t even know. My new life began in that moment.” Iris taught Mali about daily life, managing a bank account, nutrition, how to cook, and how to work hard. “Iris became like a mother to me. She saved my life,” Mali said with deep gratitude.

Today, Mali works with children. She loves what she does because she realizes the great importance of investing in a child’s life. In the future, Mali would like to start her own organization to help other kids who are in the same situation she experienced.

Mali expressed her gratefulness toward the partners of the ICEJ: “Through receiving an educational scholarship from the ICEJ, and realizing people around the world believe in and support me, I know I will achieve my dream.”

Jeremiah 29:11 – “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.”

Watch Mali's story at www.icejusa.org/mali
Join us in being a part of giving hope and a future to many others like Mali. Partner with us today at www.icejusa.org/aid
POVERTY GAP IN ISRAEL

Down-and-out in the Start-Up Nation – The Two-Way Split in Israel’s Economy

BY DAN HERRON

Since its inception, Israel has faced and overcome numerous existential challenges. Think about what the nation has been through in terms of military confrontations and unrest since 2000. It’s amazing that the country is now in its 14th straight year of economic growth, even when counting the years of the financial crisis.

However, at the heart of the start-up nation’s truly remarkable achievements exists a serious paradox. For all its successes, Israel has the second-highest poverty rate among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (i.e., developed nations) at 18.8%, only surpassed by Mexico. Measured on childhood poverty alone, nearly one in three of Israel’s children lives in poverty. So, even though the overall economy as such is not in crisis, many of its individual participants are—and Israel’s economy is headed for a two-way split.

This is not an unusual problem for today’s advanced economies, but one that may have serious repercussions for a nation that needs to maintain a high level of military readiness and qualitative superiority, along with strong social cohesion, to keep fighting and/or deterring its adversaries. What is the best way to properly address this issue? First, we need to understand Israel’s current strengths and weaknesses.

Here’s Where Israel Is Successful
One cannot but marvel when considering the long-term dynamic and innovative contributions Israel has made to the global economy. Israel’s brainchildren span all business sectors from smart-drip irrigation
to Intel chips for computer processors. The country is the number one generator of start-ups outside of Silicon Valley, boasting its own Silicon Wadi. Further world-beating statistics concern Israel’s number one ranking in medical patents per capita and the fact that the country outspends the world in research and development relative to its economy. In macroeconomic terms, these successes have translated into:

1. Low unemployment
2. High Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth
3. A relatively low level of public debt and inflation

**Here’s Where Israel’s Success Is Lacking**

Israel’s economy is growing and dynamic sectors are outperforming, but the country’s current growth pattern is not inclusive. Israel’s main challenges lie within the following domains:

1. Low wage and productivity growth
2. Increasingly unaffordable cost of housing and living
3. Low government expenditure on education and infrastructure

These lagging indicators can be put down to the cost of dealing with Israel’s security challenges, its import-dependent economy and fractious political system, and its peculiar demographic challenges in the Ultra-Orthodox, immigrant, and Arab-Israeli population segments.

It is important to point out that these issues are part of the national debate and that steps are being taken at the government level. Calls for reducing Israel’s poverty rate (18.8% overall and 31% for childhood poverty, with some communities suffering poverty rates over 50%) and accompanying proposals have been put forth in the Knesset. Yet funds still fall short of carrying out many of these good intentions. Israel’s economy overall is not in crisis, but many of its citizens are, and they are falling further and further behind with ramifications for the future strength of Israel.

**Why Timely Action Is Important**

Even though these developments are a social issue, the reason to act is not primarily social or ideological but economic and strategic. Excessive inequality implies wasted potential, which by some estimates costs 2–3% in GDP growth. This is poor business and leaves Israel less leeway to bolster its defense systems or its social and educational programs.

**The Solutions Are out There**

Israelis continue to display a high level of societal ethos but this is very much a real crisis, which is why action at both the grassroots and governmental level is necessary to change the negative trends.

The ICEJ wants to be an active partner in these efforts, which is the reason we want to brief our readers on the backdrop for ICEJ AID’s efforts and projects in Israeli society. Indeed, because of the political gridlock and sensitivities, some people see dedicated non-profit organizations, such as the ICEJ, as the best way forward because we can build strong partnerships and nimbly implement workable programs and solutions.

The ICEJ is actively working to do just that and to help Israel’s down-and-out get back in the game and up to speed with the successful sectors of the start-up nation. 🌟

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**Give to ICEJ AID and help us tackle the poverty problem in Israel.**

**Give now www.icejusa.org/aid**
Can I Dance With You?

For many residents of the ICEJ’s Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors, Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m. is a set date on their calendars to participate in their favorite activity of the week—dance night! Live musicians play old Israeli songs, as well as beautiful ballroom dance music, making both lips and bodies move to their amazing rhythms.

The joy the music and dancing brings to the survivors is written all over their faces. Some are on the dance floor until the end of the evening, while others enjoy the music and excitement from the sidelines. Wheelchairs or walking sticks are certainly no hindrances for them to move and feel young again. Genia, who is 93 years young said, “Everything hurts me, but I am dancing anyway. It makes me feel young again.”

For an outsider attending this evening, one of the most touching moments happens at the end of the night. Everyone in the room stands and gathers around the Israeli flag. The musicians start to play HaTikvah, Israel’s national anthem, and the survivors proudly sing with all their hearts:

“Our hope is not yet lost. It is two thousand years old. To be a free people in our land, The land of Zion and Jerusalem.”

These Holocaust survivors are living proof of this very hope that came to pass in their lifetime. It is the hope of being free people in their own land—the land of Zion and Jerusalem.
Fun Days in Jerusalem

The ICEJ headquarters recently hosted educators from an ICEJ AID sponsored educational program for youth at risk. Annual “fun days” in Jerusalem for the youth include a lunch and visits to cultural and historical sites, as well as a visit to the ICEJ, where they have the opportunity to meet Christian friends of Israel for the first time. The excitement and inspiration the youth experienced left quite an impression within the entire program, which resulted in the remaining educational staff coming to meet our ICEJ staff for themselves. Connecting Christians and Jews represents the heart of our work to break down barriers built over centuries and enables reconciliation and new relationships to develop.

In Memoriam: Yossi Friedman

Tuesday, July 11, 2017, was a day of great sadness as another resident, Yosef Friedman, passed away. He and his wife, Deanne, lived at the Haifa home for the past six years. “Yossi” as he was fondly known was born in 1932 in Romania.

Even though his father had left the family before WWII broke out, Yossi and his family survived the War, and in 1964 he immigrated to Israel where he married Deanne. Life has not been easy for them, but they always managed to find happiness and joy in life. Since living at the Home, Yossi would entertain residents and guests with his singing and hospitality.

Over the past few years, however, his health declined. After his hospital visit earlier in the month, he was taken to a nursing home to recover. There was still hope that he would return to the Haifa Home, but sadly, this was not to be. Deanne also has health issues and requires a full-time caretaker; therefore, she is no longer living at the Haifa Home.

We are saddened as it feels like a gap has been left with the loss of our dear Yossi and with Deanne no longer living at the Home.

Let’s Help While We Still Can!

Time is running out. There are many survivors waiting to find such a loving home and community like Yossi and Deanne. With no government funding, the Home is completely dependent upon donors such as you. With the growing needs of an increasingly older resident population, here is what your donation can provide:

1. Daily resident needs, such as food and medicine
2. Additional staff, such as a nurse and assistant cook
3. Renovation of residences
4. Upkeep of community facilities and kitchen

Show your love today by supporting the ICEJ’s Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors

Send your gift to help: www.icejusa.org/haifa
The ancient city of Caesarea Maritima nestled along the Mediterranean coast was one of the most significant seaports in Israel in the first few centuries after Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Named “Caesarea” in honor of Caesar Augustus, this urban center was a hub of commercial importance known for wine, olives, oil, fruit syrups, and nails. It was a city of splendor—white limestone was its principal building material. Mosaic sidewalks with long rows of pink granite and marble columns led from the city center to a distinguished amphitheater. Thousands more columns stood in parallel rows along the streets.

Today, Caesarea is known for the remains of a ten-mile-long Roman aqueduct which runs along the beach to the north of the city, just as it did in the first century—reflecting the architectural genius of Herod the Great. This aqueduct supplied the city’s drinking water, as well as water for public baths. The restored Roman amphitheater is used today for concerts and the remains of Herod’s hippodrome and palace, or the “praetorium,” are viewed by tourists.

It was in this praetorium in Caesarea that the apostle Paul was kept a prisoner for two years. It is also from here that Paul took the gospel to the heart of the Roman world—first through the Roman rulers he met with in Caesarea, and then in Rome itself.

**Prison Was His Pulpit**

In the fall of AD 57, Paul was being attacked by an angry mob outside of the temple in Jerusalem when the Romans took him into protective custody and then sent him to Caesarea to await trial. Felix, the Roman governor, heard Paul’s case and delayed his decision—but a few days later brought his Jewish wife, Drusilla, to hear the curious prisoner. Paul proceeded to preach to the two about the righteousness of Christ, self-control, and judgment to come. Felix responded to the gospel in fear, deferred his verdict, and put Paul in prison. However, he often brought Paul before him so they could speak further.

After two years, Festus succeeded Felix as governor and called for Paul to appear before him. When Festus suggested that perhaps he should be taken to his accusers in Jerusalem, Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed his case to Caesar (Acts 25:11–12). Festus was left puzzled by this, because he knew Paul was innocent. But this would be the way Paul would take the gospel to Rome as the Lord had told him he would.

Festus then brought Paul before King Agrippa and his wife Bernice, who happened to be visiting Caesarea. According to Festus, Paul wouldn’t stop talking about the death and...
resurrection of Jesus; this intrigued Agrippa, who said, “I also would like to hear the man myself” (Acts 25:22).

The next day, in the auditorium in the city of Caesarea, Paul once again embraced the opportunity to preach the gospel to not only Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice, but to the commanders of the Roman Legion, and all the prominent men of Caesarea (Acts 25:23).

In front of these rulers and dignitaries Paul declared: “I stand, witnessing ... That the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22–23).


**The Gospel Goes to Rome**

Once in Rome, Paul presented his case to the Jewish leaders who announced they had heard nothing bad about Paul from the Jews in Judea. Growing numbers of Jews assembled to hear Paul teach about the kingdom of God and preach from the Law of Moses and the prophets, “persuading them concerning Jesus” (Acts 28:23).

During this two-year period, Paul—a Roman citizen—lived in his own rented house under guard. He “received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ” with boldness and without hindrance (Acts 28:30–31). It was from there that he wrote his letters to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

Though Luke leaves readers hanging (we aren’t told if Paul ever went before Caesar in Rome), Paul’s letter to the Philippians reveals he became known throughout the whole palace guard, a body of 10,000 elite soldiers in Rome. His influence went beyond this group “and to all the rest” (Philippians 1:13) which suggests Paul was well-known throughout the entire city. There is even reference in Philippians 4:22 to “saints” in Caesar’s household.

Paul did not allow house arrest or even prison to stop him but taught and preached to anyone who would listen. In this way, the gospel spread not only to the Jewish community in Rome but even to the household of the Roman Emperor—the result of a providential two-year hold in a prison cell in Caesarea and a bold request to come before Caesar in Rome.
ICEJ Focuses Herzliya Conference on Growing Christian Support for Israel

The Christian Embassy was a major contributor at the annual Herzliya Policy Conference in June, delivering a strong message that Christian support for Israel has become a strategic asset for the Jewish state and that Israeli leaders and policymakers need to give due weight and attention to this growing movement in the decades to come.
“I know for many of you it seems strange that the representative of an evangelical Christian organization is addressing you at the opening session of the Herzliya conference,” Dr Bühler stated. “However, there is a major demographic shift taking place in the world today that is so significant that in the years to come, Israel and this conference cannot ignore it any longer. Over recent decades the global Evangelical community has become the fastest growing religion in the world, and is on the way to overtake Catholicism. I want to challenge you to think about the strategic opportunity that the Evangelical world can offer to Israel today and in the future.”

ICEJ Senior Spokesman David Parsons moderated the panel discussion the next day. Adam Abrams of the Jewish News Service reported, “One session stood out from the rest due to how it opened—with prayer: ‘Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time of engagement together between Israel and the Jewish people and Christian friends. We just ask that this be productive and effective.’”

Panel participants moved on to provide firsthand accounts from all five continents on the expanding influence of pro-Israel Christians worldwide. Representing North America, National Religious Broadcasters President Dr. Jerry Johnson explained why he and so many other American Christians support Israel: “The Jewish people have been a blessing for Christianity,” he said. “When you read the Hebrew Scriptures, you read about liberty, freedom, and the rule of law. Israel stands alone in this region in defense of these values.”

Speaking for Latin America, Rev. Luis Fernandez Solares, national director for ICEJ Guatemala, described the many efforts Hispanic Evangelicals are undertaking on Israel’s behalf, such as holding mass rallies and dedicating streets and public squares to Israel. He noted that recent studies confirm Latin America is increasingly Evangelical, and therefore pro-Israel.

Gottfried Bühler, head of the ICEJ’s German branch, insisted that despite a rise in anti-Semitism and the BDS movement, “there is a growing positive trend in many Christian churches across Europe. Not only are growing numbers of Christians becoming more aware that the roots of their faith are in Judaism, but they are also ready to take action.”

Rev. Abdou Maiga, ICEJ’s special coordinator for West Africa, noted the recent warming in Israel-Africa relations. “Israel has frankly more friends than enemies in Africa,” he declared. “We are working under the radar of the international media, and in some cases, even Israeli authorities are not aware of our efforts on their behalf.”

Joseph Chou, the national director for ICEJ Taiwan, assessed that there are now approximately 20 million pro-Israel evangelical Christians in Asia. “My conservative estimation is that there are at least 20 million Chinese Christians who are praying for Israel in their morning, weekly, and monthly prayer meetings.”

Akiva Tor from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ended the roundtable by affirming that Israel “sees the success of Christian Zionism as an important national interest.”
The United States and Israeli militaries are closely aligned with similar ethics policies governing their actions. Although the media often characterize Israel Defense Forces (IDF) operations as crimes, let’s take a reality check. Here are examples of context and facts which demonstrate the humanitarian bedrock of Israel’s military personnel.

Twisted Facts Abound
In 2014, Israel conducted Operation Cast Lead, and common headlines were, “Israel Bombs Gaza.” Most news reports omitted the context that terrorists had rocketed southern Israel’s civilians for years on end, during which Israel demonstrated great restraint while almost daily her frightened citizens ran for cover from incoming rockets. Other articles with headlines such as, “Israel Kills Civilians in Gaza” made no mention that Hamas terrorists purposely hid themselves inside their own civilian population, cruelly turning them into human shields, and had used apartment buildings as weapons storage sites.

One of the best-kept secrets during the war were the protective measures taken by Israel to save the lives of civilians in Gaza. Those measures included the Israel Air Force dropping pamphlets in Gaza warning the population to take shelter before they attacked a known weapons cache or rocket launcher. Thousands of warning phone calls were also made from Israel into Gaza before attacks. After all that, Israelis also rerouted in-flight missiles if civilians were observed in harm’s way in the last few seconds. It seems Israelis were more protective of Gaza’s civilians than its Hamas terrorist government.

Checkpoints a Necessity
Accusations about Israel’s checkpoints are also skewed and lack context. Due to decades-long, deadly terror resulting in the murder of thousands of Israeli civilians in restaurants, buses, and homes, Israel is forced to maintain checkpoints and conduct searches. They don’t prefer to do this but necessity calls for it, because armed terrorists have been found hiding in ambulances and suicide bomb-belts have been hidden under Palestinian women’s burkas.

Checkpoints are certainly inconvenient for Palestinians who work inside Israel or need to travel to Israeli hospitals for treatment. Despite the challenges, however, thousands of Palestinians daily go in and out of the checkpoints to their needed destinations.

Stopping Weapons Transfers
Israel’s Air Force is excoriated when it conducts targeted bombing runs into Syria, yet from the beginning of Syria’s unraveling Israeli leaders have been clear they would bomb any detected weapons transfers from Iran to Hezbollah. The weapons transfers continued unabated, and now that the war is slowing down, Hezbollah is pulling out of Syria to again focus its energy on using those weapons to destroy Israel.

IDF Humanitarian Aid
An underreported yet powerful example of the IDF’s humanitarian character is the field hospital on the Syrian border where they have rescued more than 5,000 wounded Syrians who make it to safety. If the wounds are serious, the IDF transports them to Ziv Medical Center, a hospital in northern Israel. Through translators, the Syrian patients express shock, then gratitude for the skillful and kind treatment they receive. Although Israel and Syria have no peace treaty, Israelis still provide humanitarian aid when possible.

It’s useful to recall Benjamin Franklin’s quote when you are forming your opinion about Israel’s military and media coverage of its actions: “Half a truth is often a great lie.”

Visit us at www.IsraelAnswers.com
and get your question about Israel answered!
ICEJ

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12 Day Tour // June 18–29, 2018

The Israel Impact Tour is our amazing, power-packed 12-day young adult tour to Israel—the land of the Bible.

This longer tour is uniquely designed for maximum spiritual impact on your life while having a tremendous, fun experience in Israel. This tour, that originates with a group flight from the USA, is being led by Susan Michael, ICEJ USA Director, and Pastor Jessica Harkins, The Rock in Hesperia, California.

Arise Summer Tour
10 Day Tour // July 10–20, 2018

Join an international group of young adults for our amazing cross-cultural young adult tour of Israel.

Travel with us for 10 exciting days of outrageous fun as we explore the land of the Bible and show God’s love for the people through practical outreach projects. This tour, that originates in Israel, is being led by Jani Salokangos, ICEJ Arise Director in Jerusalem.

Contact ICEJ USA Young Adults Coordinator Peter Eckenroad at peter.eckenroad@icejusa.org

www.israelimpacttour.com (888)772-7732 ext. 742
Bless your pastor with a trip to Israel

This unique Israel tour for pastors also includes a four-day international Envision Pastors' Conference in Jerusalem. Pastors and leaders from around the world gather annually for this inspiring conference each year. This trip is perfect for ministers who are looking for a tour to Israel that offers something more in-depth.

January 15–26, 2018
12-DAY TOUR • $2,795*

www.icejusa.org/envision-2018

*Subsidized rate for credentialed pastors and ministers only. Special non-credentialed spouse/student pricing also available.

For a brochure or to register contact: tours@icejusa.org or call: 866-393-5890