A Milestone in ALIYAH
An Aliyah Timeline

TO A CITY OF GALILEE NAMED NAZARETH
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.

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CONTENTS

4 TO A CITY OF GALILEE NAMED NAZARETH

7 A MILESTONE IN ALIYAH

12 THE KNOCK ON BIBI

17 ICEJ GERMANY HOSTS YAIR NETANYAHU

18 THE “BIG LIE” AGAINST THE JEWS
To a City of Galilee Named 

NAZARETH

BY SUSAN MICHAEL, ICEJ USA DIRECTOR
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hristmas pageants around the world begin with these introductory words out of the Gospel of Luke: “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary” (Luke 1:26–27).

The angel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary that she will give birth to the Savior is one of the most astonishing moments in history—not only because of God’s intervention in the human story but also because of Mary’s response. This unwed, religious teenager says yes to God, without question, reservation, or hesitation: “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord,” she said, “Let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Mary’s response proves she was the right girl for the job. A deeper look at her story, however, reveals a God who had been busy at work for centuries to bring about this special moment. He had revealed bits and pieces of the story to the prophet Isaiah 700 years earlier, then maneuvered kingdoms, exiles, revolts, and a government census to connect the dots and weave this most beautiful of stories.

Born in David’s City

Joseph and Mary were both of the lineage of David, which means their ancestors were not originally from the Galilee but the southern Judean region. Hence, they were required to appear in Bethlehem to be registered at the time of the Roman census.

Their ancestor, King David, had been born in Bethlehem, and the prophet Micah had prophesied that one of David’s descendants—the coming Messiah—would also come from there: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting” (Micah 5:2, emphasis added). For this reason, first-century Jews expected the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem.

Jesus of Nazareth

Because of Jesus’ humble birth, and because his family fled Bethlehem when he was a toddler, he did not go through life known as “Jesus of Bethlehem.” One would think that the “son of David” would have been identified more closely with this city of King David’s royal birth. He was not—the Gospel of John indicates many Jews did not even know Jesus had been born in Bethlehem and, therefore, thought he lacked that messianic qualification (John 7:41–43).

That is because another city featured more prominently in the life of Jesus—so much so that it became the identifying part of his rather common name—Jesus of Nazareth. Years after his death and resurrection, even Jesus identified himself to Saul on the road to Damascus as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 22:8).

The Gospel of Matthew attempts to explain the significance of Nazareth as another fulfillment of prophecy: “And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, ‘He shall be called a Nazarene’” (Matthew 2:23, emphasis added).

However, the Bible includes no such prophecy, which has led to much discussion about what Matthew was referring to. There seems to be more than meets the eye when it comes to Jesus’ boyhood hometown of Nazareth.

Nazareth may have been small, but it did have a synagogue, and there Jesus was taught Torah and earned the title of Rabbi and teacher. The Gospels indicate both Jesus and his father were “carpenters,” and Justin Martyr said in the second century that Jesus made plows and yokes—some of which were still in use. Others point out that the word “carpenter” should be translated as “builder,” and thus, Jesus may have worked more with stone than with wood. If he was a builder, then he and Joseph may have worked in nearby towns such as Sepphoris, the Roman capital of the Galilee that was being rebuilt at the time of Jesus.

A City of Galilee

Nazareth was located in the hills of Galilee. The Assyrians had destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC, including the Galilee, and took its people into exile in Assyria. Then in 576 BC, Babylon destroyed the Southern Kingdom of Judea and took the residents of Jerusalem and those in the region of Bethlehem into exile.

Some 400 years later, the Hasmoneans reestablished Jewish sovereignty over Judea and the Galilee, which led to a throng of Jewish exiles making their way back from Babylon to their homeland. According to a document from around AD 200, blood relatives of Jesus lived not just in Nazareth but in Kechba—east of the Sea of Galilee along the route from Babylon.

Therefore, it is highly likely that Jesus’ ancestors, originally from the region of Bethlehem, made their way back from exile in Babylon, stopping right inside Hasmonean Jewish territory at Kechba. Some of the clan remained there. Others continued to the ruins of an ancient Israelite town in Galilee and built their homes there.

Archaeology indicates Nazareth was founded during the Hasmonian dynasty and was built on top of an Israelite town destroyed by the Assyrians centuries before. By the time of Jesus, it was still small and home to only some 150–400 people. They were probably all from the same clan and from the royal lineage of David (as were both Mary and Joseph).
The question is why those descendants of King David did not continue their journey out of Babylon to the south—to Bethlehem or Jerusalem. Why did they go into the Galilee, the land of Naphtali and Zebulon, and establish themselves there instead of in the land of Benjamin? They had obviously kept their genealogical record and knew of their royal lineage.

Could it be that they intentionally settled the Galilee because of the great messianic prophecy from Isaiah 9 and 11 that indicated the Galilee would one day see a great light, a child would be born with the government on his shoulders, and a branch would shoot forth from the root of Jesse? These religious Jews would have known Isaiah’s prophecies well and prayed for their fulfillment since they spoke of a messiah-king coming from their own family line.

The Netzer of David
If these descendants of David founded the town, it is possible they named it after the prophetic promise to their family in Isaiah 11, that a netzer (branch) would shoot forth from their lineage. In this case, Nazareth could mean “little branch” in Hebrew.

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch  shall grow out of his roots.
The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.
(Isaiah 11:1, emphasis added)

The question is whether they named their town after this prophecy or after their clan name. The Greek title translated “Jesus of Nazareth” in our English Bibles can also be translated as “Jesus the Nazarene.” It is not clear whether it was a reference to the name of his hometown or a reference to “Jesus from the Davidic clan of Nazarenes.” More than likely, it was a combination of both. The story of the blind man Bartimaeus seems to make the connection between Jesus of Nazareth and the Davidic line: “And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’” (Mark 10:47).

Conclusion
I have raised numerous questions and have speculated at answers based on archaeology and early church writings. Some of these details we cannot know for sure, but they certainly are possible and help to bring that annual Christmas story alive.

Jesus was not born into just any family in the lineage of David but to a clan that may have held on to their lineage and prophetic destiny throughout centuries of exile, had returned in hope, and had named their town as an expression of their messianic expectations. His mother must have been raised praying for and expecting Isaiah’s prophecies to be fulfilled to have so readily accepted the supernatural pregnancy the angel Gabriel announced to her.

Jesus was a Nazarene not only because of the name of his boyhood town but also because that town was founded by King David’s descendants who had been praying for His birth. It is no coincidence that today in Israel, the Hebrew word for Christian is Notzrim. We are followers of Jesus, the Netzer (Branch) of David.

As we enter into the season of celebrating this amazing story, may we be awestruck by the magnificence of our God and His sovereignty over the affairs of man. The weaving of this story between Babylon, Galilee, and Bethlehem—as prophesied centuries before—is one that should bring us to our knees in acknowledgment of the greatness of our God.

If He can weave together this magnificent tapestry, He can certainly take care of the concerns and troubles of our everyday lives. May we take a moment this Christmas to say along with Mary—that young Jewish girl of Davidic lineage, found by Gabriel in a city of Galilee named Nazareth—“my soul magnifies the Lord!” (Luke 1:46).

Holiday Giving
This Christmas, ICEJ AID is giving gifts to Christian Arab churches in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth. We will give gifts to the children, food for the churches to host Christmas meals, and personal food baskets for families to have a special Christmas.

Please partner with us to bring comfort and joy to those who need our love and encouragement this holiday season:

www.icejusa.org/holidays
At the Feast of Tabernacles 2019, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem celebrated reaching a new milestone in our Aliyah efforts, as we have now assisted more than 150,000 Jews in making the journey home to Israel since our founding in September 1980.

In modern times, some 3.6 million Jews have returned to the Land of Israel from all over the world—from the north, south, east, and west—in literal fulfillment of biblical promises. For example, a massive wave of over one million Soviet Jews have made their way home to Israel since the collapse of the Iron Curtain 30 years ago in October 1989. In response, the ICEJ was there to help with this historic ingathering, not only from Russia but also from many other regions of the world.

The ICEJ has engaged in a wide variety of Aliyah efforts, working closely with the Jewish Agency for Israel and other partners to help with the Jewish return to the Land of Israel. As of October 2019, the ICEJ has provided substantial assistance to more than 150,000 Jews making the journey home to Israel. That represents more than 10 percent of the Jews who have made Aliyah over the past four decades.

In addition to these Aliyah figures, the Christian Embassy has also provided generous assistance toward absorption projects that have helped tens of thousands of new Jewish immigrants settle into their new homes and integrate into Israeli society.

Meet the New Immigrants
To mark the occasion, the Christian Embassy invited 40 of our recent Olim (new immigrants) to attend the traditional Israeli Guest Night during the Feast of Tabernacles. This included individuals or families from Belarus, Brazil, China (Kaifeng Jews), Colombia, Ethiopia, France, India (Bnei Menashe), Russia, South Africa, and Ukraine.

The 150,000th Oleh assisted by the ICEJ is Danyl Godim, a medical doctor from Ukraine who made Aliyah in 2019 with his wife, Ana (a nurse), and their two children.

Their son Elia, 16, came ahead of the family on the Na’ale youth pre-army program supported by ICEJ. His parents and 10-year-old sister, Oliana, came on the Jewish Agency’s “Profession for a New Life” program for medical doctors, also supported by ICEJ. Thanks to this unique program, Danyl will receive his license to practice medicine in Israel in less than a year.

Danyl and his wife decided to make Aliyah because they feel Israel is their true home and here they will be able to give their children a better future.

“We are grateful for all the assistance we have received and could not have made Aliyah without it,” said Danyl. “We now want to begin giving back—me as a doctor, Ana as a nurse, and Elia as a soldier in the Israeli army.”

“I really have a hope that my family will find a good future and a good education here,” added Ana. “And I’m really thankful so much for everyone who helped us. I’m talking now about not only [money], not only about some food, it’s also about moral support.”

By David Parsons, VP & Senior Spokesman
MAIN ROUTES OF ALIYAH

Meanwhile, the ICEJ’s main routes of Aliyah have included:

**St. Petersburg-Helsinki**: The ICEJ’s first major route of Aliyah was through St. Petersburg and Helsinki, and we have now transported over 35,000 Jews from Northwest Russia to airports in St. Petersburg and Helsinki and over 4,000 Jews to the airport in Belarus—all bound for Israel.

**Kaliningrad**: Another 5,000 Jews have been transported from the Kaliningrad enclave in Poland for flights to Israel since the early 1990s.

**Ukraine**: During the 1990s, when the ICEJ was the main sponsor of the *Exodus*, we bussed over 35,000 Jews to Kiev and other locales for flights or voyages by ship to Israel. Since the crisis with Russia erupted in 2013, the ICEJ has sponsored flights, pre-Aliyah seminars, Aliyah programs, and transportation efforts for over 2,000 Ukrainian Jews.

**Central Asia**: ICEJ has assisted over 8,000 Jews coming home from Uzbekistan and neighboring Muslim republics since 1996.

**Western Aliyah**: Over the past decade, ICEJ has assisted with the upswing in Aliyah from France and Germany, as well as from North and South America.

**Ethiopia**: After sponsoring numerous absorption projects for Ethiopian Jewish immigrants for many years, the ICEJ has sponsored direct flights to Israel for 1,920 Ethiopian *Olim* arriving since 2016.

**Bnei Menashe**: ICEJ has partnered with *Shavei Israel* to bring 1,065 Bnei Menashe from northeast India since 2012.

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The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ) launches the “Mordechai Outcry” campaign, a series of demonstrations by Christians in numerous world capitals to protest the plight of Soviet Jewry.

ICEJ Finland, under the leadership of Dr. Ulla Järvilehto, begins supporting a hospitality center in Vienna set up by Eva Huber to assist Jewish families leaving the Soviet Union via Austria. ICEJ branches in Germany and the Netherlands soon joined the effort, which assisted over 60,000 Jews over the next seven years with clothes, shoes, toiletries, and other needed items.

In May 1990, the ICEJ welcomed its first Aliyah flight, a full Boeing 747 planeload of Soviet Olim sponsored by its German branch. Since then, the ICEJ has funded over 54 direct charter flights with Jewish families coming from the former Soviet Union.

The Berlin Wall falls and the door opens wider for Jews to leave the Soviet republics via Finland and other routes.

The ICEJ becomes the main sponsor of the Exodus Project and transports over 35,000 Jews to airports in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Eastern Europe for flights to Israel.
1991
The ICEJ opens an Aliyah route via Hungary, with ICEJ Switzerland using van convoys to bring over 7,000 Jews from western Ukraine to Budapest for flights to Israel over the next two decades.

1992
The ICEJ opens the Raoul Wallenberg Center in Budapest to assist Jewish families on their way to Israel.

1996
The ICEJ opens an Aliyah office in St. Petersburg, Russia, managed by ICEJ Aliyah Director, Howard Flower.

1998
The ICEJ initiates the “Far Distant Cities” program to help Jewish families moving to Israel from Siberia and other vast reaches of the former Soviet Union. The ICEJ launches the first of many Aliyah bus trips to the Central Asian republics to transport Jews to airports.

2009
The ICEJ begins sponsoring Aliyah flights for Jews from Sweden and other western countries.

2010
The ICEJ begins Aliyah efforts in Latvia and Lithuania.
ICEJ sponsors its first Aliyah flights for Jews from France.

2012
The ICEJ partners with Shavei Israel to bring over 1,000 Bnei Menashe from northeast India.

2013
The ICEJ responds to the Ukraine crisis with “fishing” efforts and sponsored Aliyah flights for Ukrainian Jews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>The ICEJ sponsors the return of the Jin family, the first Chinese Jews from the ancient Kaifeng community to make Aliyah.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The ICEJ begins sponsoring Aliyah flights to Israel for Russian Jews who had moved to North America.</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>The ICEJ launches Aliyah work in Belarus.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>ICEJ starts sponsoring “Red Carpet” welcomes for new immigrants with the Jewish Agency for Israel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>The ICEJ sponsors the renewed wave of Ethiopian Aliyah.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>The ICEJ increases support for Jewish Agency for Israel’s Aliyah summer and winter camps throughout Eastern and Central Europe.</td>
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The ICEJ rejoices in having assisted more than 150,000 Jews in making Aliyah to Israel. Yet the great Ingathering of Israel continues. By the end of 2019, Israel expects to take in another 35,000 new Jewish immigrants this year. And once again, the ICEJ will be assisting 10 percent of these Jews in moving to Israel. Indeed, the Christian Embassy is on schedule to help around 3,500 Jews to make the journey home to Israel this year. Plus, the Jewish Agency has told us to expect Ethiopian Aliyah to resume and even accelerate in 2020. So, give today to the Aliyah work of the ICEJ.

Give to www.icejusa.org/aliyah
Israel recently entered uncharted waters when, for the first time ever, a sitting prime minister was indicted on criminal charges, even while the nation—again for the first time—entered an unprecedented twenty-one-day free-for-all in parliament to form a new government or face unparalleled third national elections in a row.

Benjamin Netanyahu—still clinging to power as interim prime minister since last November—came out swinging against the indictments for fraud, breach of public trust, and bribery announced by Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit. Denouncing the charges as a "coup" cooked up by the Left, the biased media, and corrupt police elements, Netanyahu also blasted the timing of the indictments. Indeed, they came just as the Knesset began an untried three-week process in which any MK can present the president with a list of sixty-one members willing to join his coalition and thereby avoid a third round of elections.

Until now, Netanyahu was still holding out
hope he could lean on a united bloc of 55 nationalist and religious MKs to ensure him immunity from prosecution and somehow find a way to stay in office. But that option may no longer be workable, as the state’s top prosecutor contended that Israeli law does not allow a Knesset member under indictment to receive a mandate from the president to head a coalition government.

It may take time for the new reality to set in, but it does look like Benjamin Netanyahu’s ten-year reign as Israel’s premier is coming to an end. He has a decent chance to eventually fend off the charges and could make yet another political comeback one day. But as we go to press, petitions to the Supreme Court are already being drafted to force him to resign, and even within his own Likud party the jockeying to replace him as chairman has begun.

The Bane of Bad Press
How did “Bibi” get here? There are three criminal cases against him. One involves the “improper gifts” (expensive cigars, pink champagne) he received from wealthy friends allegedly in return for favors. The other two are centered around his efforts to get better press: the Yediot/Israel Hayom affair and the case involving Bezeq/Walla, which carries the most serious charge of bribery and presents the biggest evidentiary challenge to Netanyahu.

Now, I strongly believe it is a slippery slope to start criminalizing attempts by anyone to get better media coverage. The press is unelected, unaccountable, elitist, increasingly partisan, and abusive of its own powers. All too often, they are the ones selling “access” for profits. But it is clear that Netanyahu (and his family) had grown extremely frustrated with the continual sniping against them in the Israeli press, and he was looking for ways to change that which he must now answer for in court.

The current scandals came to a head amid an atmosphere in Israel where Netanyahu was widely portrayed as corrupted by his many years in power, as feeling entitled to privileges as if he were a hereditary king. Over the past decade, the Israeli Left has been reeling, devoid of a leader who could capture the Center again by offering the public a viable peace agenda with the Palestinians. Instead, it was an anti-Bibi agenda that gained traction, leading to the rise of Blue and White and his present predicament.

The media played a major role in the piling on of Netanyahu.

In retrospect, Benjamin Netanyahu has always faced certain unfair criticisms and misperceptions that he has had to overcome during his rise to the top and prolonged stay there. Here are some of the more potent (though often hidden) instances which help explain the real reasons why he grew so tired of the negative media coverage and why the Left is so against him.

The Shadow of Yoni
Growing up, Benjamin Netanyahu and his brother, Yonathan, were grouped among the “young princes” of Likud—the sons of the party’s founding generation who were destined for positions of national leadership (along with Benny Begin, Dan and Sallai Meridor, and Ehud and Yossi Olmert). But Yoni Netanyahu’s date with destiny was cut short when he fell in battle as the commanding officer during the epic Entebbe raid in July 1976.

“Yoni” instantly became a national hero. He had already shown such promise as a natural leader. He was bright, handsome, and courageous—a philosopher/warrior whose men would follow him anywhere. That romanticized view of Yoni Netanyahu remains undiminished by the years, as evidenced by the recent Netflix film Follow Me! And by all accounts that lionization of Yoni is well placed.

However, it also meant his younger brother Benjamin would always be dogged by the hugely unfair perception that he is a lesser man. From the start of his public career as a gifted young Israeli diplomat at the UN, the “knock” on Bibi was that Yoni would have been a truly great leader and the nation got stuck with second best. Sure, Benjamin Netanyahu has proven over time to be amazingly articulate and highly competent in geo-strategic and economic affairs to the point of being widely admired as a generational statesman for the entire Western democratic world. But inside Israel, many still see him as standing in his brother’s shadow, or even worse, of exploiting Yoni’s popularity and tragic death to advance his own career. This has been an immensely unjust and personally painful hurdle for him to overcome.

The Shadow of Rabin
As Netanyahu quickly rose within the Likud ranks, he became party chairman and Opposition leader in 1995, just as the Oslo process became a bitterly divisive issue in Israel. When Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was cruelly assassinated by a Right-wing extremist, the Left blamed Bibi for fueling the incitement that led to his death. They cited the chants of “traitor” and posters of Rabin dressed in Yasser Arafat’s keffiyeh at the Right’s anti-Oslo rallies. The accusations were unfair, and he has spent many years denying them. But the Left’s loathing of Netanyahu over Rabin’s death has lingered to this day.

At the recent official memorial ceremony on the anniversary of Rabin’s passing, Netanyahu was
probably as forthcoming and contrite as he has ever been on the subject. He conceded that there indeed was a lot of hateful incitement against Rabin in those days and he should have done more to confront it, but he insisted that he never called Rabin a “traitor” and always rejected the notion that Oslo was an act of treason. Nevertheless, lurking in the background of the present drive to oust Bibi is this odious claim that Rabin’s blood is on his hands—yet another immensely unjust and personally painful hurdle for him to overcome.

The Shadow of Ben-Gurion

The Left did manage to drive Netanyahu from power once before, in 1999, using some very underhanded tactics. Humbled, he took a time out from politics and then staged a comeback in 2005 when Ariel Sharon abandoned Likud to form the centrist Kadima faction ahead of the Disengagement from Gaza. It took a few more years, but Netanyahu returned to the premiership in 2009 and has stayed in office for over a decade now. This remarkable achievement means that he has now eclipsed founding father David Ben-Gurion as modern Israel’s longest-serving prime minister. The Left has resented this and had hoped to oust him before it happened. Their efforts fell a few months short but they now look to be finally carrying the day.

This particular “knock” on Bibi runs deeper than most realize. Ben-Gurion, more than any other single person, shaped Israel into a nation built on the model of European socialism. The kibbutzim are testimonies to the utopian idealism of those days, that Israel would be this egalitarian society where everyone would share in its success and seeking individual wealth would be seen as taboo. Ben-Gurion himself lived an austere lifestyle and never wore a tie.

Over recent decades, Israel has transformed itself into the innovative “Start-Up Nation” modeled more on American capitalism. Israeli entrepreneurs are inventing cutting-edge paywalls and traffic apps and then cashing out in the billions—something which would have been frowned upon there in the 1950s and 60s. Netanyahu, more than any other single person, has overseen this socio-economic transition by his championing of free markets and Israel’s hi-tech wizardry.

With their dream of Israel as an ideal model of socialism gone, many in Israel’s Left and even the Center are now striving to preserve a sense of Israel as a model of pure, upright democracy. That is an honorable goal! But they believe Bibi has tarnished Israeli democracy with his corruption and constant maneuvering to retain power. Whether those criticisms are accurate will now be tried out in a court of law. But when you add everything up, he does have a legitimate point that he is being unfairly run out of office.

The legacy of Benjamin Netanyahu is still being written. But it cannot be disputed that he already stands on rarefied grounds as an orator and statesman, is profoundly competent in geo-strategic and economic affairs, and also has mastered the rough-and-tumble of Israeli politics. The fact that he has managed to retain his seat as prime minister over the turbulent course of the past year is testament to all of these extraordinary skills.

But if the Israeli people want to change the way politics is done here and offer the world a truly pure model of democracy, then a lot more has to change than simply ditching Netanyahu. And the nation needs to examine whether the current push to oust him is really rooted in petty jealousies and unwarranted “knocks” on a truly great leader. 😐

(Pictured Center) David Ben-Gurion – Prime Minister and Minister of Defense
URGENT BOMB SHELTER CAMPAIGN
HELP PROTECT ISRAELIS

HELP US PURCHASE 8-10 BOMB SHELTERS FOR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. BOMB SHELTERS COST FROM $24,000 TO $60,000, DEPENDING ON THE SIZE AND TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION REQUIRED. HELP THE ICEJ RAISE $240,000.

GIVE TO WWW.ICEJUSA.ORG/BOMBSHELTER
ICEJ Netherlands held its annual Conference at a Christian retreat center in southern Holland, which drew nearly 500 Dutch believers from all over the country. National Director Dr. Jacob Keegstra (right) and his wife Hennie hosted the three-day gathering, and David Parsons (left) came from Jerusalem to be the featured speaker.

**ICEJ INTERNATIONAL**

**SHAPING HISTORY THROUGH PRAYER IN THE BALKANS**

*By Mojmir Kallus, ICEJ VP – Int. Affairs*

Macedonia, a federal state in former Yugoslavia, occupies a small area in the Western Balkans, between Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the name “Macedonia” became a problem for the Greeks who could not accept that another country should use the name, historically associated with Greece.

The impasse lasted for more than two decades until, in 2018, the leaders of Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic agreed the country would be called North Macedonia. Local Christians shared with ICEJ a fascinating story behind this breakthrough, which secular media does not report.

A group of intercessors from the Balkan countries had been meeting in different locations throughout the region to pray for healing, reconciliation, and forgiveness—something this blood-drenched part of the world needs. A few months ago, these intercessors met at a small town on the shores of the Prespa Lake and, during their prayer time, sensed spiritual breakthrough. Soon after, the leaders of Greece and Macedonia met in the same town at the very same hotel and announced they had reached an agreement regarding the name of the country.

When an international team and ICEJ Vice President of International Affairs Mojmir Kallus visited the region in September, they met with several of the intercessors and discovered the involvement of several ICEJ national leaders in this group. We rejoice at having found such faithful partners.

Against this backdrop, we are confident that the recently established branches in Bulgaria and Albania will continue to prosper. The newest addition is ICEJ Macedonia, which opened after a short preparatory work on September 10, 2019. National Director Asparuh Hadji Hristov (also a professional musician) is supported by a board of pastors representing the body of Christ in the country. We wish them many blessings for their work on behalf of Israel.

**DUTCH BRANCH HOSTS SUMMER CONFERENCE**

ICEJ Netherlands held its annual Conference at a Christian retreat center in southern Holland, which drew nearly 500 Dutch believers from all over the country. National Director Dr. Jacob Keegstra (right) and his wife Hennie hosted the three-day gathering, and David Parsons (left) came from Jerusalem to be the featured speaker.
AN UNUSUAL COMMEMORATION
BY MOJIR KALLUS, ICEJ VP – INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

“Here we are again, one year later: visiting Auschwitz, and then walking these 120 kilometers to commemorate the exceptional act of two Slovak Jews, Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler. During the walk, old friends meet again and new friendships begin. Remembering those who never escaped from Auschwitz. Deep thoughts, light conversation, laughter, and listening attentively to excerpts from books written by the two heroes. Anger, disappointment, and reconciliation. New plans and ideas. Whatever you imagine.”

These are the words of a participant of the annual memorial walk from Oswiecim, Poland to Zilina, Slovakia. Since 2014, this walk has been organized by the Czech and Slovak branches of the ICEJ to commemorate a heroic escape from the death camp in April 1944, motivated by the effort to save Hungarian Jews. The two Slovak escapees, Vrba and Wetzler, are credited with saving up to 200,000 lives—definitely something worth commemorating.

This commemoration is unique because it is not a ceremony or a classroom lecture but action. People walk for six days, following in the footsteps of these heroes. They are exposed to the elements, sleeping in tents or simple mountain cabins. They spend time together, listen to the story of the escape, discover the authentic places, enjoy beautiful nature, and have plenty of time for reflection. And, surprisingly, most return the following year to repeat this arduous and yet richly rewarding experience.

ICEJ GERMANY HOSTS YAIR NETANYAHU AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE
BY ICEJ STAFF

ICEJ Germany held its annual national conference in Stuttgart in August and invited Yair Netanyahu as a special guest to address the issue of German government funding of anti-Israel causes.

In recent months, German media outlets have been reporting extensively on the Berlin government’s direct and indirect grants to radical left-wing NGOs in Israel that seek to undermine Israeli policies and its democratic processes. The issue came to the fore after Yair Netanyahu, son of Israel’s prime minister, challenged German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas in a tweet to stop the funding.

In his well-received speech to the gathering of over 1,000 German Christians and Jewish community leaders in Stuttgart, Yair Netanyahu provided more background on the German government’s funding of leftist NGOs in Israel and the Palestinian territories. He asserted that Germany does not provide similar funding to NGOs in any other democratic country except for Israel. He also noted persistent reports of German support of Iran over recent years. Netanyahu also reviewed modern Israel’s rebirth and spoke of Israel’s favorable treatment of its Christian community in contrast to the plight of Middle East Christians in neighboring Arab countries.

Their feedback might tell you why they return year after year:

“Thank you for the wonderful week. Great cleansing of mind in the company of nice people. This year has been the best of all. I look forward to seeing you again next year.”

“Dear friends, thank you for your pleasant company of exceptional people during the walk in August. We will certainly see each other again.”

“Thank you for everything. It is wonderful that even after the walk is over, this community lives on. We are looking forward to the next meeting.”

“Next year in Auschwitz might sound strange, but actually it is not a bad idea. For more information write us at info@icejusa.org. I hope to see you there.”

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Your Israel Answer:

The “Big Lie” against the Jews
By Susan Michael, ICEJ USA Director

When we think of Germany under the Nazi regime, we have images of a military police state in which the people were coerced to acquiescence, and to speak against the regime would have meant the loss of one’s life. However, Hitler also had a stunningly effective propaganda strategy that aided in the control of the people—a strategy still in use today.

The Big Lie

The “big lie” is an expression coined by Adolf Hitler to describe his technique of telling a lie so colossal that no one would ever suspect it was not true. He first described this concept in Mein Kampf (German for “My Struggle”), the autobiographical manifesto outlining his plans for ruling Germany.

He surmised most people would never think of fabricating colossal untruths, so they would not believe others had. In other words, Hitler understood that people would see the world through the lens of basic honesty and would assume that same trait in others.

Use of Propaganda

Propaganda was the tool Hitler would use to convey the big lie and garner support of the masses. Successful propaganda would speak to their emotions more than to their intellect, be limited to a few points, and would harp on slogans. He said that the repetition of simple slogans was necessary for the masses to retain them.

Hitler’s words ring with a chilling truth. In spite of how evil his plan was, he knew how to get it past the people. When he became the Head of State in Germany, Hitler implemented his strategy precisely. He fabricated the “big lie” of the evil Jew causing Germany’s troubles, and he used propaganda to instill it in the minds of the people, preparing the way for the extermination of the Jewish people.

Timeless Strategy

Hitler’s strategy is still working today. Mein Kampf was translated into Arabic back in the 1930s and has been one of the all-time best sellers throughout the Muslim world since. Mein Kampf means “my struggle” within the Nazi context, while jihad, a major tenant of Islam, also means “struggle.”

It is no coincidence, therefore, that Muslim leaders, such as Iran’s Supreme Leader, have adopted Hitler’s strategy. They are propagating the “big lie” of the evil Jews (particularly Israelis), using emotionally charged slogans and anti-Semitic cartoons to get the support of the people and prepare the way for the final annihilation of Israel. Anti-Semitism is not limited to Iran but is at epic proportions throughout the rest of the Muslim world where conspiracy theories run rampant and all types of lies are easily believed about Israel and the Jewish people.

One of the “big lies” circulating even throughout the West is that Israel is an apartheid state. The accusation is a serious one, claiming that the world’s one and only Jewish state is racist, with institutional discrimination and legal oppression of non-Jews. The proponents call for the international community to impose boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) to pressure the “evil” Israelis.

The inspiration for this campaign comes from the dismantling of South Africa’s apartheid regime in 1994 after several years of protests and the imposition of international sanctions. The goal of the campaign against Israel is the same: that one day she too will be dismantled.

The accusation, however, is not true. Admittedly, the Arab minority in Israel has unique challenges over and above the usual minority difficulties due to the security situation. However, Israeli Arabs study in universities with Jewish students, shop in the same malls, and take the same buses. They have their own political parties and representatives in the Israeli Knesset, have become famous athletes, have won Miss Israel competitions, and have even served as Supreme Court judges.

Clearly, this is not an apartheid state. Nevertheless, many university students around the world are being taught this slogan as though it were fact. This “big lie,” with its catchy slogans and anti-Semitic cartoons, is meant to prepare the way for Israel’s political annihilation by progressive westerners and military annihilation by Iran and jihadists.

We must all arm ourselves with the facts and speak up against this evil campaign. We must also call for a robust effort at the government level to bring international compliance with standards of education and press that are free from anti-Semitism.
Be a part of that future generation spoken of in Psalm 102 that is partnering with the Lord in His work to restore Zion, for the set time has come.

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