Rediscovered in modern times, the Bnei Menashe were officially recognised by Israel’s Chief Rabbinate as having Jewish ancestry in 2005. Some 1,700 Bnei Menashe were then able to make the journey back to Israel, but their aliyah has been suspended since 2007.

The remaining 7,200 members of the community have thus been living the past five years in uncertainty about their future. But their main advocate, Michael Freund, has now managed to persuade Israeli officials to resume their aliyah flights, with the first plane of 270 Bnei Menashe expected to arrive in September, just in time for the start of the new school year.

This first wave of 50 Bnei Menashe families is expected to be followed by another flight in time for Hanukkah in December.

“I will bring your descendants from the East.”
Isaiah 43:5-7

For hundreds of families in northeast India, the news could not have been more exciting!

After spending several years in limbo, members of the Bnei Menashe tribe were recently informed that Israeli authorities are ready to welcome aliyah flights for their community. The first plane load is expected to arrive in Israel by September and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem will have the privilege of sponsoring this initial flight.

The Bnei Menashe, meaning “Sons of Manasseh”, claim descent from one of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, who were sent into exile by the Assyrian Empire more than 27 centuries ago. Their ancestors wandered for centuries along the Silk Road through Central Asia and the Far East, before settling in what is now northeast India, along the border with Burma and Bangladesh.

Throughout their sojourn in exile the Bnei Menashe continued to practice Judaism, including observing the Sabbath, keeping kosher, celebrating the festivals, and following the laws of family purity. And they continued to dream of one day returning to the Land of Israel.

ICEJ to sponsor first aliyah flight of the Bnei Menashe

BY DAVID PARSONS

The remaining 7,200 members of the community have thus been living the past five years in uncertainty about their future. But their main advocate, Michael Freund, has now managed to persuade Israeli officials to resume their aliyah flights, with the first plane of 270 Bnei Menashe expected to arrive in September, just in time for the start of the new school year.

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>> CONTINUED ON PAGES 4-5
Dear Friends,

These past weeks have been an exciting period of ministry. My recent travels for meetings in Austria, Norway, Brazil and Hungary have proven again that the Kingdom of God is expanding. Any place we go, we discover that wherever the Holy Spirit is moving He is instilling a deep and passionate love for Israel.

God says that He is jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion (Zechariah 1:14; 8:2). No wonder that as the Spirit of God moves, He imparts that very same zeal for Israel to all His children around the world.

In many places thousands came to hear about Israel and to show their support for the Jewish people. In Brazil, we experienced again a supernatural dimension of love for Israel as an entire stadium was filled with more than 100,000 pro-Israel Christians.

Apostle Rene Terra Nova, our Brazilian national director, oversees a vast movement of churches in Latin America with some 6 million followers. He requires all the pastors under his oversight to visit Israel. “How can they lead the sheepfold of God if they miss out on what is so important to His heart?” he told me.

Another very exciting development has presented itself to our ministry in recent weeks. After years of thorough investigation, Israel recognised the Bnei Menashe community in northeast India as Jews even after over 2,500 years of exile. For the past five years, some 7,000 of these descendants of the tribe of Menashe have been waiting for final approval to return to their ancient homeland. Well, they are now coming! What a miracle! And the Christian Embassy has been given the privilege of sponsoring the first flight of Bnei Menashe families, expected to arrive in September.

By faith, we have committed to covering this initial flight. So please pray and consider your part in this modern-day miracle, as the remnant of Israel returns to Zion. God says in Jeremiah 30:3 that, “For behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,’ says the Lord. ‘And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.’”

Please help us to bring this lost tribe of Israel back home. In total, we will need US$ 300,000 to cover the first plane load of some 270 Bnei Menashe. You can sponsor the return of one of these “Sons of Menashe” for US$ 1,100. Any contribution will make a difference.

Thank you for standing with us! May the Lord bless you from Zion!

Blessings,

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ Executive Director
The ‘living waters’ of Brazil

By Rev. Juha Ketola
ICEJ International Director

Among my recent travels to oversee the ICEJ’s network of international branches, a highlight was a trip in June to the annual conference in Brazil organised by our Brazilian national director Apostle Rene Terra Nova. The gathering again drew some 100,000 Christians for a closing rally at the Samba Stadium in the city of Manaus, located at the mouth of the great Amazon River. This huge water source indeed gives one a great picture in the natural of what the Lord is doing spiritually in this part of the world.

Over 6,000 kilometers long, the Amazon River carries more water than any other river in the world and contributes some 20 per cent of the fresh water which flows into the world’s oceans each year! By this massive river stands the port city of Manaus, with its 1.6 million residents, more than half of whom are born-again believers!

The church pastored by Apostle Terra Nova alone has 70,000 members! Brazil as a whole has over 42 million Evangelical believers now, some 22% of its 200 million population. The body of believers grew by 16 million in the last decade alone. So ‘rivers of living water’ are flowing in this land from hearts set ablaze by Jesus (John 7:38-39).

Just before the ICEJ’s annual conference there, a staggering one million Christians joined the yearly ‘March for Jesus’ event in Manaus. The influence of the Church is to be seen everywhere in this tropical city, including in the city leadership, as the present Vice Mayor of Manaus has been a part of Pastor Terra Nova’s church leadership for many years.

Terra Nova also oversees a vast church network of about six million Christians in Brazil and across Latin America, and from this position he has taken an unashamed stand to bless and pray for Israel.

I travelled to Brazil with my colleague ICEJ Executive Director Dr. Jurgen Buhler and our wives, as well as with Israeli Knesset Member Robert Ilatov, who was eager to see the Brazilian people and landscape first-hand. MK Ilatov was received warmheartedly and engaged with some 6,000 local pastors about how they can bless and support his nation. Later, at the final rally, he delivered official greetings on behalf of the state of Israel to the vast crowd of 100,000 pro-Israel Christians.

Dr. Buhler and I also conducted special teaching sessions for the pastors about God’s plans for Israel. Jurgen then preached at the Stadium rally, highlighting the importance and meaning of the Chosen People.

As the Amazon River passes Manaus, you can see a unique phenomenon, with blue and brown waters, warm and cold, flowing distinctly side-by-side. You can put your hand in the water and feel the difference in temperature. This is also a picture of spiritual truths. The world is growing cold towards God and His people, but the body of Christ in Brazil is warm towards Israel and is prospering and moving forward in power. What about the body of Christ in your nation? Can you feel the difference? 😊
“The return of this lost tribe to Zion more than 2,700 years after their ancestors were exiled by the Assyrian empire is nothing less than a miracle”, said Freund.

“The Israeli government and Jewish Agency have requested that the ICEJ pay for their flights,” added Howard Flower, the ICEJ’s Director of Aliyah Operations. “So the Christian Embassy has stepped into the gap and pledged to cover the first flight planned for September and hopefully more to come.”

Soon after their arrival, each family will be eligible to receive government funding to help pay for their housing and other absorption costs. The families will eventually be settled in the Galilee.

The return of the Bnei Menashe provides an amazing opportunity for Christians to express our love and support for Israel, and to participate in the promised last-day return of the Jewish people to their homeland. But we need your immediate help, as the expected costs for the first flight of Bnei Menashe will be more than $300,000.

So please give generously to make the dreams of the Bnei Menashe come true, according to God’s promise to bring home Israel’s descendants “from the East!”

Play a part in biblical prophecy, as Israel’s sons return to her borders. Support the aliyah efforts of the ICEJ at:

http://int.icej.org/aid/aliyah
The Baite family has been selected to join the first flight of Bnei Menashe bound for Israel in coming weeks. Here is a family profile, as told by their patriarch:

My name is Otkhokai Mordechai Baite, aged 67. I was born to a family of priests among the Bnei Menashe. My father was the priest and elder of our village and was responsible for all the rituals and customs concerning our community. Now, I am following in his footsteps as the chairman of our community, Moreshet Menashe, here in the town of Moreh on the border between India and Burma.

My wife Batsheva, aged 61, is an entrepreneur who deals in private export and imports of goods between the two countries.

I am blessed with six sons and two daughters. My son Yonathan made aliyah to Israel in 2007 and, after completing a course in computer programming, is now pursuing a professional career in aviation technology. He resides in Ma’alot with his wife Joicy.

With the help of my oldest son Shmuel, I run a transportation business which includes a passenger bus plying to and from Imphal, the capital city of Manipur, and a truck that transports people and materials within the town of Moreh.

Shmuel also helps me with the administration of the Moreshet Menashe community and is an active Shavei “Fellow” who devotes a great deal of his time towards the welfare and progress of his fellow Bnei Menashe. Shmuel, his wife Sara and their children are keen on making aliyah and leading an observant Jewish life in the Holy Land.

My second son, Eleazer, has settled in the town of Churachandpur along with his family. He runs a local timber firm there and is planning to make aliyah and then, G-d willing, to resume his line of work in Eretz Israel.

My third son, Yotham, is also married and is the chazan (cantor) of our synagogue. He runs a goods store and is an excellent accountant.

Yoshi, my fourth son, has finished his Bachelor of Computer Applications from Manipur University in Imphal and is now planning to get a Masters’ Degree in Israel.

My youngest son, Tzion, aged 18, has just taken his high school graduation exams. He is an active participant and youth leader in our community.

My daughter, Rivka, aged 25, has completed her secondary exams, and my youngest daughter, Elisheva, aged 20, has done her higher secondary exams. They, too, dream of settling in Israel and continuing their education.
ICEJ honoured for funding community for Holocaust survivors

In late June, the Municipality of Haifa recognised the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem for funding Israel’s largest assisted-living facility for Holocaust survivors by naming the street where it is located the “Christian Embassy Center”.

ICEJ Executive Director Dr. Jürgen Bühler led a delegation of Embassy staff to the dedication ceremony, which was hosted by our charitable partner Shimon Sabag and also was attended by Haifa city officials and numerous Holocaust survivors.

Over the past two years, the Christian Embassy has funded a special project to expand an assisted-living facility in Haifa for impoverished Holocaust survivors. The ICEJ purchased and renovated two apartment buildings in the Hadar neighbourhood, with the enlarged facility now able to accommodate over 100 residents as well as to feed and provide medical care for additional survivors in the Haifa area.

At the dedication, the ICEJ handed over another check for $150,000 to finish some improvements at the Haifa Home. The Christian Embassy is still raising more funds to help operate the assisted-living home, as well as to purchase and renovate several more apartment buildings that have become available on the same street. An additional $750,000 will be needed to complete this latest phase of the expansion project.

The growing group of residents of the “warm home” are all Jewish survivors who spent their childhoods trapped inside Nazi-occupied Europe. Those admitted to the home are drawn from a long list of survivors in dire need of assistance with housing and medical care.

An estimated 200,000 Holocaust survivors currently live in Israel, and up to one-third of these are in dire financial straits, often due to exorbitant medical bills. More than 2,000 applicants, mostly survivors of Nazi camps in Poland and Germany, have joined the waiting list for a place in the Haifa Home. A careful selection process identified the most worthy tenants based on need.

Please support this urgent and worthy humanitarian project.
Give to ICEJ AID today at int.icej.org/aid/icej-aid
The Christian Embassy staff attended a most unusual event in Haifa in June – a beauty contest among fourteen elderly yet elegant Holocaust survivors vying in a very friendly competition which valued their poise and story-telling more than their appearance.

Organised by our charitable partner Shimon Sabag, the gala evening drew ample media attention from both the Israeli and foreign press. All of those in attendance could readily see the contestants were thrilled to be involved in a beauty pageant that was so life affirming for them.

The 14 finalists had been whittled down from an original list of hundreds of contestants from Holocaust survivor associations across Israel. Several contestants, including the eventual winner, came from the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors, which is funded by the ICEJ.

The ladies wore stylish dresses, while a leading Israeli cosmetics company provided them with hair and make-up treatments. Each contestant then took to the stage to tell briefly of their experiences and suffering under Nazi occupation as well as the lives and families they later built once in Israel.

The judges for the contest included three former Israeli beauty queens along with the head psychiatrist for the Haifa district, who spends time each week with the Haifa Home residents. She explained that these ladies had been robbed of many of the joys of youth during World War II, and that it was an uplifting form of therapy for them to take part in an evening where they could feel so beautiful again.

The judges selected Chava Hershkowitz of the Haifa Home as the winner.

Chava, who comes from Romania, was like so many other Jewish youths deprived of a normal childhood due to Hitler’s cruelty. As a little girl she was transported by train to a Nazi camp in the Ukraine, where she was certain she would die.

The journey was a succession of horrors. Chava and her family were crammed into a cattle car unsure of their destination, without food or water or bathrooms. Some suffocated to death aboard the train. At one point they stopped near a synagogue and all the train passengers were forced inside. Families got separated, and some Jews were beaten to death. The following day, everyone had to cross a river on wooden rafts. Many fell into the water and drowned.

From there, they marched on foot for several days and nights to a town called Lutzintzik. There, the Jews were packed into a barn. Since it was winter, even more people died from the cold and sicknesses.

They were eventually transported to Transnistria – an area in the Ukraine conquered by German and Romanian troops in 1941. The region was used as a killing field for exterminating Jews. In comparison with the carefully planned deportations of Jews from Germany, the Romanian authorities had not prepared to house thousands of deportees in Transnistria. Instead, they were placed in crude barracks without running water, electricity or latrines. Those who could not walk were simply left to die.

Deportation to Transnistria meant death for thousands of Jews, and the roads were littered with corpses. Over 30,000 Jews were deported to Transnistria, and 60 per cent of them died there.

Somehow, Chava and her sister Sarah managed to survive until the camp was liberated in 1944. The sisters were supposed to be taken to Palestine, but decided not to go without their brother. So they missed their ship and waited for the next one. Soon, they found out that the first ship had been sunk.

Today Chava and her sister are being cared for at the Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa. She is still active and helps the staff wherever she can. She enjoys welcoming the newcomers, and her loving personality is appreciated by all.

“It has been really good for me to be here,” shares Chava. “It is good for me to keep busy, because then I don’t think so much about the past. If I don’t do anything, it all comes back to me.”
In June, a delegation from the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem took part in the opening of a new facility for disabled Palestinian Arabs in the Christian town of Beit Jallah, on the western edge of Bethlehem, which was funded in part by a generous donation from ICEJ Germany.

The new building is run by a German Christian ministry which has been serving handicapped Arabs in the Bethlehem area for over a decade, helping them integrate better into society.

The new facility will house vocational workshops for the disabled, seminar rooms, and several rehabilitation programs. An additional story will be completed by the fall which will contain a school for disabled children and a medical clinic.

Friends and supporters of the new center joined local officials, construction workers, disabled children and their families, along with the center’s staff for the opening ceremonies. Burghard Schunkert from Germany, director of the center, welcomed the guests and thanked everyone for their assistance.

“We built this house with the help of many good people”, Schunkert said. “We are able to serve handicapped people even better now and we can offer them new ways to live their lives.”

“In Palestinian society there is a big rejection of disabled children”, he explained. “The parents say a wheelchair in class will distract their children. We believe it will be an asset for everybody to educate impaired and healthy children together.”

The highlight of the opening was the cutting of a ribbon by one of the disabled students at the center. Sitting in her electric wheelchair, Asma snipped the ribbon with a big smile on her face.

Some 20 years ago, she fell from the roof of her house while hanging out the laundry and lost a leg. She endured many operations but Christian workers lovingly took care of her and helped her complete an apprenticeship. Today, Asma works at the knitting workshop, earns her own living, and leads a largely independent life.

Afterwards, handicapped students staged a play, and then sang and danced for the gathering. Dressed as colourful butterflies, the kindergarten children performed an Arabic song “We are spring”.

Please help us support this and other projects for the disabled in Israel.

Give to ICEJ AID today at int.icej.org/aid/icej-aid
A Fun Day with Lone Soldiers

Recently, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem sponsored an outing for 45 IDF “Lone Soldiers” at Teddy Stadium in Jerusalem, featuring wall climbing, self-defence courses and other sport activities. The ICEJ staff joined in on the fun and afterwards each soldier was given a special gift at a luncheon in the Eucalyptus restaurant in Yemin Moshe. “Lone Soldiers” are young Jews from around the world who have come to serve in the IDF while their families remain abroad.

ICEJ Staff Renovate Youth Clubs in Ramle

By Birte Scholz

In mid-June, the ICEJ staff in Jerusalem joined Jewish and Arab children in renovating two after-school youth clubhouses and planting a garden in the mixed Arab-Jewish town of Ramle, near Ben-Gurion Airport.

Over the past year ICEJ AID has been sponsoring multicultural activities for Arab youths in Ramle and children of Jewish families from Latin America who have recently settled in the town. Both groups showed up for a day of fun and hard work together, alongside some 20 members of the ICEJ staff.

All the youngsters are part of the Israel Youth Award program, which encourages Jewish and Arab youth in 137 clubs around the nation to pursue excellence in studies, sports, hobbies and community service. The program’s mission is to encourage, empower and educate youngsters from low-income families for future leadership roles, social involvement and personal achievement.

It was a sweltering day at the start of the summer vacation, but the ICEJ staff and 26 disadvantaged youths worked side-by-side to paint the outside walls of the clubhouses and plant a garden.

Elementary students Netanel and Osher proudly pointed at the wall, shouting “We painted the grass!” Meanwhile, little Aziza eagerly helped dig a ditch to irrigate the garden.

“We will plant cucumbers and tomatoes. Those bring the quickest results in growing”, said Shai, a club supervisor. “Then the kids can make their own salad.”

The mayor of Ramle stopped by to thank the ICEJ for caring about his town’s youngsters. Aviva Ben Rafael, director of the Israel Youth Award program, also came to express her gratitude to the Christian Embassy for supporting its efforts in Ramle.

“We are building something very special. We choose to understand each other, people-to-people, Arab and Jewish youths working together”, Ben Rafael explained. She added that she comes every year to the ICEJ’s Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem and thus assured that, “We have the same agenda.”

By Birte Scholz
In June, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and the Knesset Christian Allies’ Caucus partnered in presenting a special briefing in the Knesset on the Islamist campaign of violence against Christians in sub-Saharan Africa and its impact on Israel and the region.

MK Robert Ilatov, member of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, hosted ICEJ guest speakers Rev. Umar Mulinde from Uganda and Rev. Abdou Maiga from Senegal for a discussion of the unrelenting terror and violence being directed at Christians by Islamist elements in North Africa. Many of the conflicts and militia attacks in these regions are starting to affect Israel as thousands of Africans are fleeing conflicts in their home countries and making their way into Israel through the Sinai.

Both Pastor Mulinde and Rev. Maiga were born into strict Muslim families in Africa and were trained in dawa religious schools, but later converted to Christianity and entered the ministry. They explained the roots of Muslim hostility towards non-Muslims from the unique perspective of having grown up within Islam. They also discussed the current tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities from Senegal to Somalia, as well as the positive development of how many African Muslim converts to Christianity are being transformed into committed supporters of Israel.

Rev. Maiga, a native of Mali, described how his sister and mother were recently forced to flee Timbuktu due to the conquest of the city by an al Qaeda-linked militia, who then declared an independent state in northern Mali.

“The radical Islamist agenda in the Sahel of Africa not only includes terrorism against civilians and persecution of Christians, but also the increasing danger of secessionism. Following the precedent of Mali, more and more Muslim-majority areas will now demand to separate and form their own countries, which will be Islamist controlled”, warned Rev. Maiga, a respected Bible scholar in West Africa who was in Israel to complete a course in conflict resolution at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Pastor Mulinde noted that the Islamist “terrorism and persecution are symptoms of a deeper illness, which is an evil ideology. We must confront this ideology if we want to defeat the terrorism and violence in Africa.”

“In the West it is politically correct to speak of Islam as being a religion of peace. But the moderates have already lost to the radicals within the Muslim faith, because the radicals have gained control over the mosques in Africa and elsewhere, from which they propagate their militant message of world domination. They are educating the younger generation to hate Christians, Israel and our democratic freedoms”, insisted Pastor Mulinde. He has a church in Kampala, Uganda and is in Israel receiving special treatment at Sheba Medical Center for severe facial burns suffered in an acid attack carried out by radical Muslims last Christmas Eve.

MK Ilatov and Amb. Avi Granot, head of the Africa division at the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed a keen interest to work with the Christian Embassy and its expanding network of pro-Israel pastors and supporters in Africa to find ways of building better relations with African leaders and helping with development projects in the region.

For more information, go to: www.icej.org/knesset
In January 2011, the Lord called the ICEJ as a ministry into a more intimate relationship with Him in prayer. Since then, we have seen some exciting answers to our prayers and are expectant to see even greater things ahead.

The power of prayer
Prayer is a powerful agent of change. Doors which seem to be closed can open, necessary resources are released, and needed expansion takes place if we draw near to God. Lingering needs, the lack of growth, or waning influence can often be traced back to an absence of prayer. “You do not have because you do not ask”, says James 4:6.

Jesus challenges us to ask the Lord of the harvest to provide the means to bring in the harvest (Matthew 9:38). Dedicate yourself to spending more time in prayer.

Working for Israel often allows us no rest as new challenges crop up daily. But we should never blame a busy schedule for our lack of prayer. Martin Luther once said that if he had a busy day ahead he actually needed to spend more time in prayer.

The Son of God also gives us the example of regularly withdrawing – even late into the night – to converse with the Father in heaven. Consider dedicating an hour each day to prayer – for Israel and for the Christian Embassy.

Prayer strategy
As we pray, we need to pray strategically. Paul explained that his own personal ministry was characterised by purpose and vision. “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.” (1 Corinthians 9:26)

The Greek word for ‘uncertainty’ (adelos) describes somebody running a race without a fixed goal. If we have no fixed goal ahead of us, we are in danger of merely beating the air and our prayers accomplish little.

Jesus teaches us that believers united in prayer can transform the most difficult situation. “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19)

The ICEJ has branches in more than 70 nations. What a power this represents if we agree in prayer.

God’s mindset
Finally we need the “mind of Christ” as we pray (1 Corinthians 2:16), and here is the good news! As we draw close to Him, we are transformed and we start thinking like He thinks. The mind of Christ has more to do with understanding who God is than with insights into a specific detail we pray for.

David overcame Goliath not only because of the ingenious (or rather, foolish) idea of not using heavy armour but a mere slingshot. David’s victory was based in his child-like faith in an omnipotent God. Saul and the other Israelites were more impressed by Goliath than by their God. But not David! He knew he served an all-powerful God.

So as you pray, be assured that the Almighty is on your side. He enjoys listening to you and even more answering your prayers. Listen to His voice and expect great things to happen.

Please check with your national branch office for our prayer times and the ICEJ prayer group closest to you. If there is none around, ask to open one in your church. Together, let us carry out great exploits as we all draw closer to God!

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ International Director

Join our Global Day of Prayer on the first Wednesday of every month!
Find out more at: http://int.icej.org/isaiah-62-prayer-initiative
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