SEASON OF LIGHT
ICEJ LOOKS FORWARD TO NEW YEAR
Projects and events fill the 2005 calendar
The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ)

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was founded in 1980 as an act of comfort and solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people in their claim to Jerusalem.

Today, the Christian Embassy stands at the forefront of a growing mainstream movement of Christians worldwide who share a love and concern for Israel and an understanding of the biblical significance of the modern ingathering of Jews to the land of their forefathers.

From our headquarters in Jerusalem and through our branches and representatives in over 80 nations, we seek to challenge the Church to take up its scriptural responsibilities towards the Jewish people, to remind Israel of the wonderful promises made to her in the Bible, and to be a source of practical assistance to all the people of the Land of Israel.

The ICEJ is a non-denominational faith ministry, supported by the voluntary contributions of our members and friends worldwide. We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide.

If you wish to make a donation to the general work of the ICEJ or to a specific project described in this magazine, please use the attached response envelope, use the address below or visit our Web site at www.icej.org/get-involved to send your gift. All donations are tax deductible according to the law of your country.
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When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” - John 8:12
Dear Friends,

New elections in the USA have brought new plans and initiatives for the Middle East. This, coupled with the death of Yasser Arafat, has given many people hope that a lasting formula for peace will be found in the region.

To be sure, we must pray for peace and we must avoid the attitude of being cynical. No doubt the urgent need of the Middle East region is prayer. Lots of it! Prayer is not a weak endeavour. According to the Bible, the destiny of nations have turned on “its wheels.” A casual reading of the book of Daniel will confirm and illustrate this.

In the book of Revelation the final triumph of Christ’s Kingdom over the world is said to be because of prayer. It is in response to the prayers of God’s saints that evil is overthrown and replaced with an order of righteousness (Revelation 8:1-5). Any Middle East observer will confirm that evil and disorder reign in many areas of the region. Innocent men and women are beheaded in Iraq and in Israel suicide bombers take the lives of children in the name of religion. Nothing could be more evil and hypocritical. Prayer can and will turn things around and make a crucial difference.

Most of all, Israel needs prayer. The new opportunities mentioned at the beginning of this editorial could so easily become new expressions of evil and conflict. As Christian people who appreciate that the God of the Bible has returned His ancient people to the land of Canaan, we must pick up our responsibility to pray and to do so regularly. After all, we have enough fuel “for this work” tucked away in the pages of scriptures.

We must pray for Israel’s leaders, for her peace and for her redemption. We must also pray for the Palestinians; that good leadership will emerge from among their ranks and shoulder the responsibility of seeking a genuine and lasting peace to the region’s problems.

Ultimately the God of the Bible reigns supreme over all the earth and our prayers, if faithfully discharged, will blend in with His purpose and bring forth His triumph. We should not expect less since He is a prayer answering God. In closing, may I remind you that there is a mystery to prayer. The answer from heaven is not always immediate, nor as we expect. Our confidence, however, is in God’s character that we know is good, holy, righteous, loving, kind and perfect!

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

Yours in Jesus,

Malcolm Hedding
Former ICEJ staffer turns his tragedies into an effective ministry

By Nicole Schiavi

Former ICEJ Jerusalem volunteer and ICEJ Canada spokesman Majed Shafie has launched a ministry, based in Toronto, dedicated to helping persecuted Christians - a burden he has carried since he himself was tortured for his faith in a Muslim country.

Some readers of “Word from Jerusalem” (May/June 2002) might recall Shafie’s story when he went by the name “Mack Smith” for security reasons. He came to Israel as a refugee, in a miraculous, made-for-movies escape from Egypt on a jet ski across the Red Sea.

A former Muslim, Shafie became a believer in Jesus during his law school days in Egypt. Seeing how Egyptian law regarded Christians as lower class and how his Christian friends were mistreated, Shafie began seeking truth for himself. He accepted Jesus as his saviour and promptly embarked on a program of activism regarding the mistreatment of Christians.

Shafie was soon jailed and tortured severely for his beliefs and, though released from prison, was summoned to court again. He chose instead to risk an escape to Israel rather than face a certain death sentence. At the Red Sea, the Lord performed yet another miracle, parting the water as Egyptian and Israeli patrols pursued him from all sides. He ditched his jet ski on the Eilat beach and ran to a nearby hotel. He was caught, but he was safely in Israel.

The ICEJ stepped in to help Shafie’s case along with Amnesty International and other organizations. After a year and three months of legal wrangling, Israel released Shafie and
he worked at the ICEJ in Jerusalem for two years before moving to Toronto to work for ICEJ Canada.

Shafie is now moving forward on his own with the cooperation of the ICEJ. His own experiences and the Lord’s call have set him in his own ministry to help the persecuted.

Shafie said one Christian is persecuted every three minutes worldwide. This year, an estimated 200 million Christians were persecuted and 80 percent of them live in Muslim countries.

His organization, One Free World International, will seek to raise awareness and improve the conditions and civil rights of all persecuted Christians in need of a voice. Shafie also wants to help by sending pastors and Bibles to these people.

“Persecuted Christians are dying but they are still smiling. They are in a deep dark night but they still have the candle of the Lord,” Shafie said. “Our enemy is strong, but we have the Lord on our side. They can kill the dreamer, but no one can kill the dream.”

Shafie is currently broadcasting two radio programs - one to the entire Muslim world, “River of Love,” and another one specifically to Iraq, “Encourage Iraq.” From these programs, Shafie knows of more that 700 Muslims who have accepted Jesus in the past two years.

His organization will also stand with Jewish people against anti-Semitism. Shafie was in the midst of six suicide bombings and shootings during his time in Israel.

“Every time in these six instances I saw a mother holding her daughter, people crying, I smelled burnt flesh. I asked the Lord, ‘Haven’t I seen enough pain in Egypt?’ I think the Lord wanted me to see the other side,” he said. “It was amazing for an Egyptian man, having been taught to hate the Jewish people by the media, the government, the people around you ... to see the suffering and pain of the Jewish people.”

Shafie said he fondly recalls his time with the ICEJ.

“It wasn’t a business, it was a family,” he said. “Tim King (ICEJ Financial Director), he’s like my father. And Donna Holbrook (ICEJ Canada Director) - she started me here with everything and helped me stand up on my feet.”

To contact Shafie or learn more about his ministry:
Email: majed@onefreeworldinternational.org
Web site: www.onefreeworldinternational.org
Phone: in Canada, 416.436.6528

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House of prayer dedication

Christian leaders from the ICEJ and all over Jerusalem gathered to dedicate the new location of Succat Hillel, a local ministry with a 24/7 house of prayer. While the ministry, headed by Rick and Patty Ridings, has been hosting worship watches for years, the new building across from Mount Zion was opened in December.
Behind the scenes

ICEJ staffer's story shows amazing daring and courage

BY Nicole Schiavi

Her heart beating wildly, Lolita Kidess stood at the border crossing into China, her suitcase full of Bibles she’d be illegally smuggling into the country.

The last time she had done this, the Lord told her to walk through security - and she did so without being noticed. This time he urged her to put her bags through the x-ray machine. In a harrowing moment, her friend’s suitcase was opened to reveal the illegal cargo, but seconds later the guards neglected to scour Lolita’s suitcase and again she was clear to enter the country.

“All of the Bibles I brought were able to get inside,” she recounted.

Working with Lolita in the Finance Department of the ICEJ, many would hardly suspect that behind the quiet, hard working bookkeeper lies a number of audacious and spiritually daring stories in Lolita’s life that have transpired since she decided to follow Jesus.

As a matter of fact, few co-workers knew Lolita’s story until she shared at staff devotions recently her adventures that have run non-stop since the day she got saved.

From the moment she was saved, the scripture Isaiah 40:1, to comfort God’s people was birthed in her heart and her goal was eventual ‘promotion’ to Israel, she said. Lolita began evangelising in other Philippine cities and provinces. She would sometimes hike eight hours over mountains to remote villages, preach and then walk back home.

“From north to south to east to west I saturated the Philippines,” she said.

After several years of doing this in the Philippines and running Bibles into China and Burma, Lolita sought a job in Israel. Her first job, as with many Filipinos in this land, was home care. She met her first challenge in Israel in the home on a surly elderly woman.

“The first person I comforted was my employer,” she said.

The challenges, however, were grooming her for more adventure. Shortly after arriving here in 1992 Lolita networked with other believers in the vast Filippino community and began Bible studies from Jerusalem to Ramallah.

“I was used to that kind of travelling so I did it also here in Israel,” she said. “I would go to different places, it didn’t matter if it was dangerous or what. It doesn’t matter to me, I just go.”

Lolita frequently travelled to the West Bank to hold Bible studies, where people were saved, discipled and encouraged.
Her prayer walks around the Old City and the Temple Mount with other fiery intercessors may never have been reported but have gone down in the annals of heaven.

Lolita took a position as bookkeeper at the ICEJ five years ago, but now as with many other volunteers in the land subject to a five-year limit on time of service, she will be leaving. Lolita said she will return to the Philippines and wait on the Lord to show her the next step. She sees the Philippines as a new challenge since many parts are Muslim-dominated.

“I want my whole country to be really on fire for the Lord, to be saved,” she said.

We are all rather certain that whatever she does, it will certainly be an adventure!

Serving with a heart of love

As a registered nurse at the ICEJ, Corrie Van Maanen’s work as head of the ICEJ Home Care department takes her far and wide across Israel into the homes of many immigrants in need of medical assistance.

Most of the elderly Russian immigrants that Corrie visits have come from a daily life of struggle. Upon arriving in Israel they realize they’ve come to face a new set of challenges that are equally difficult.

Motivated by her desire to serve Jesus, Corrie’s visits often consist of practical work like helping the patients take a shower, do strengthening exercises, dress wounds and perform many other home care needs that the patients cannot accomplish on their own.

Often the subject of conversation turns to the situation in the land and together with Corrie, they discuss their fears in the light of their decision to come to Israel.

Corrie said she has many opportunities to share the love and hope that she has and reassures her patients that the God of Israel brought them to the land of Israel to give them hope and a future, even in these dark days that Israel is going through.

To further the work of our Home Care services, join in prayer and financial support to bring the light of the Lord into the homes of more immigrants across the land.

Motivated by her desire to serve Jesus, Corrie’s visits often consist of practical work like helping the patients take a shower, do strengthening exercises, dress wounds and perform many other home care needs that the patients cannot accomplish on their own.
From the 1st to the 4th of November, the ICEJ participated in the dedication and opening of The Pavilion, the brand new and permanent home now acquired, renovated and owned by the King of Kings Assembly.

King of Kings Assembly was founded in 1983 by Jim Cantelon and was then known as the Jerusalem Christian Assembly. In 1988 Jim Cantelon returned to Canada and the leadership of the Church passed to Wayne Hilsden. Under Wayne’s leadership the ministry grew and developed in many areas including education, international leadership and national stature within the Body of Christ.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has for years played a supportive role in terms of helping to build up and under gird the ministry of King of Kings Assembly. Its staff has served and do continue to serve in leadership positions in the Assembly and, in the same way, members of the congregation have played a major role in the ICEJ’s production, The Covenant.

In the 1980’s Malcolm Hedding, our Executive Director, served on the pastoral team of King of Kings Assembly for three years and now the ICEJ had the honour and privilege of sponsoring one of the evening celebrative events to mark the opening of the new congregational home, The Pavilion.

This night was a very special one as Paul Wilbur, the well known worship leader and song writer from the United States, sang and led the congregation and its many international guests into the presence of God to express their thankfulness to Him for all that He has done for the King of Kings Assembly.

The ICEJ is proud to be associated with the King of Kings Assembly and congratulates them on the opening of their new permanent home, The Pavilion.
Documenting the Lord’s work

ICEJ Hungary director, film maker wins prize for a televised documentary

By Nicole Schiavi

Lilla Matis, recently appointed as ICEJ’s national director in Hungary, won the main PRIZMA prize in the Ecumenical Film Festival for a television documentary she produced about a blind Christian girl who wants to become a bridge between Jews and Christians, and undertakes a journey to Jerusalem.

Matis’ film was chosen out of 70 documentaries in Hungary’s National Film Theatre in November.

This prize was just another notch in a career as one of Hungary’s well known film makers. Matis has worked in the film industry since the 1970s, after earning her degree as a director in the Hungarian Academy of Film and TV, and working as a second and then first assistant to the country’s top directors.

After she turned her life to Jesus in 1985, Matis made her support for Israel a main focus of her career. Matis began volunteering with the ICEJ Hungary office in 1993 and has attended every Feast of Tabernacles since 1994.

She featured the feast that year in a 70-minute broadcast in Hungary. The reaction was overwhelming and positive and now her Israel broadcasts are quite expected.

“I’m just doing my job and the Lord provided a permanent presence in ministry,” she said.

Matis also produced nightly Feast videos and the highlight videos for the ICEJ from 1995-2000 and the highlights video from the 2004 Feast.

Matis works for the satellite cultural TV station, DUNA, which was established to educate Hungarians outside the country, and transmits all over Europe and Israel.

Five million Hungarians live outside the country compared to a 10 million population within the country. Before World War II, the second largest Jewish community in Europe lived in Hungary. Now 80,000 Jews live in Hungary, according to Matis, but she said many have assimilated, a common reality during communism.

Meanwhile, Matis said that despite the fall of communism in Hungary, a new trend of anti-Semitism has emerged: anti-Israel sentiment.

“Standing with Israel is not popular in my country,” she said. “People don’t want a Biblical view, just a political one.”

But Matis stands with Israel nevertheless and encourages churches in her country to do the same. She maintains good relations with the Israeli Embassy in Hungary and the Jewish community.
Weathering opposition in Sri Lanka

ICEJ National Director encourages support for Israel in the face of hostilities

By Nicole Schiavi

On a quiet weekday in Sri Lanka, a band of Buddhists barged into John Kitto’s church and threatened the workers.

“They said we had one month to get out or they would paint the walls with our blood,” said John Kitto, the church’s pastor and ICEJ national director in Sri Lanka. “We didn’t budge, and two years later some of those who threw stones at us are with us.”

Kitto recounted this testimony and the work in his country to the Word by Nicole Schiavi, ICEJ National Director in Sri Lanka.

Meeting practical needs

Australian group’s work leaves indelible impression on the land

When a group of Australians arrived ready to work at the Orr Shalom children’s centre in Mevaseret Zion, a Jerusalem suburb, the staff wasn’t sure what to expect.

The group of 21, comprised of Aussies, four Indonesians and one Thai social worker, quickly gained the nickname “crazy Australians” because of their tireless work and long hours in the glaring autumn sun.
From Jerusalem during an ICEJ national directors’ meeting in October. Kitto himself has been to Israel 10 times. Each year he encourages more pilgrims to join him and celebrate the Feast in Jerusalem. This year – the 25th Feast of the ICEJ – Kitto’s group included 25 pilgrims.

Sri Lanka is 70 percent Buddhist, but Kitto said many are coming to Jesus and a small group of Christians who support Israel is also growing.

“We take courage from Bible stories that committed Christians are always a small percentage,” he said.

He connects a drop in terrorism in Sri Lanka with peace that the government made with Israel six years ago. Sri Lanka had experienced communal clashes between its Buddhist majority and the country’s largest minority group, the Sri Lankan Tamils, who are Hindus. Christians are frequently caught in the crossfire.

With seven churches numbering about 1,500 people, Kitto has 22 full time workers. The requirement for a staff position is to live by faith, join 24-hour prayer watches and be willing to die for the Gospel.

“We don’t take anyone who is not willing to lay down their life,” he said.

Note: After the year-end tsunami in Asia, Kitto reported that all members of his churches were alive and accounted for.

Sri Lanka Fact File

Population: 19.9 million
Country name: Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Capital: Colombo
Government: republic
Religion: Buddhist 70%, Hindu 15%, Christian 8%, Muslim 7%
Language: Sinhalese, Tamil, English
At the ICEJ-France annual conference held in November, Israeli Ambassador to Paris Nissim Zvili addressed an opening night crowd of over 400 French Jews and Christians gathered in an historic hall in Lyon. Here, ICEJ-France national director Rev. Jean Fauvel (left) presents Amb. Zvili with our official 25th silver anniversary kiddush cup as ICEJ staff members David Parsons and Nathalie Charron look on.

ICEJ Norway

At the end of November, the ICEJ Executive Director, Malcolm Hedding and David Parsons, the ICEJ’s Media Department Head, attended a special seminar set up by the Norwegian Branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem for pastors, ministers and leaders.

Over 40 pastors and leaders attended the gathering at a hotel in Oslo. The focus was a thorough theological overview of the Abrahamic Covenant and its implications for Israel and the Church. While Malcolm led this segment of the seminars, David Parsons gave an excellent two-part update on the events taking place on the ground in Israel.

The meetings were characterized by a high level of interest and willingness to examine God’s Word carefully. It was a very special time and all the more so because the snow was falling outside, the sun was shining, and the warmth of God’s presence in Jesus filled our hearts. 🕊️

ICEJ Board Chairman Leif Wellerop, Executive Director Malcolm Hedding and ICEJ Spokesman David Parsons.
FEAST OF TABERNACLES 2005

SUNDAY, 16 OCTOBER - SUNDAY, 23 OCTOBER

OPENING CELEBRATION AT SULTAN’S POOL, JERUSALEM
- Tapestry of the Nations - Grand Procession
- City-wide celebration with Israeli Guests

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE JERUSALEM
- Deepen your understanding of your Biblical Heritage
- Morning sessions and seminars
- Evening celebrations with a host of international speakers and worship leaders

Sun Oct. 16       Sultan’s Pool - Opening Celebration - 7pm
Mon Oct. 17       Registration, Touring - no events
Tue Oct. 18       Opening Night at ICCJ
Wed Oct. 19       Morning Seminars and Evening Celebration
Thu Oct. 20       Morning Seminars and Evening Celebration
Fri Oct. 21       Morning Seminars and Evening Alternative
Sat Oct. 22       Evening Celebration
Sun Oct. 23       Morning Seminars and Evening Celebration

ALSO INCLUDED IN THE FEAST EXPERIENCE
- Erev Shabbat Alternatives: Succah Party, Classical Concert or Evening of Ministry
- Unique excursions (costs apply) touching the heart of Israel’s land and people
- Jerusalem March
- ICEJ 24/7 Prayer and Intercession
- Children and Youth programme

GRAFTED YOUNG ADULTS FEAST TOUR
- For information on our special young adults tour (18-30yrs), contact Grafted at: grafted@icej.org

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
ICEJ Feast Registration (Charmaine Hedding)
P.O. Box 1192 • Jerusalem 91010 • Israel
Tel: +972 2 5399700 • Fax: +972 2 5669612
Email: feastreg@icej.org

REGISTRATION FEES

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A star in Bethlehem

No decorations and no cheer in the city, but local Christians make sure to celebrate Christmas anyway

By Nicole Schiavi

Christmas in Bethlehem is no longer what it used to be. Long after the birth of Jesus and the advent of tourism, people in recent years have stopped flocking in droves to the city to celebrate Christmas.

Years of intifada have decimated the tourism industry and poverty has taken much joy out of celebrations. This year the municipality even decided, with the death of Yasser Arafat, to forgo decorations in Manger Square.

“It doesn’t have the excitement in the last few years,” said Pastor Naim Khoury. “The economy is bad, tourism hasn’t picked up lately. It is a very bad situation.”

The ICEJ helped to shed some light in the dark places this Christmas season, working with Khoury to show Christians in Bethlehem they are not alone.

Christians in the Bethlehem metropolis, including Beit Jalla and Beit Sahour, amount to 25,000 out of a total population of 150,000. The born again Christian community is even smaller - 1,500 people.

“Very, very, very few Christians think or know that there are born again Christians among the Palestinians, the Arabs,” Khoury said. “People abroad need to know this.”

To bring some Christmas cheer, Khoury organized a banquet for congregants in his church. They, in turn, invite non-Christian friends to the banquet. Last year, a number of people decided to follow Jesus at a similar function.

The ICEJ is helping this year with the banquet and food vouchers to distribute to the 140 families in Khoury’s church.

“For people in the church with no work, no job, the dinner is a highlight,” Khoury said, noting that 90 percent of the people in his church are unemployed. “These people can’t afford to go to restaurants.”
While the people are living on scattered charity from outside organizations (the Palestinian Authority hasn’t even paid its workers in the past four months let alone provided social assistance), the money is scant. Most funds go to Muslims in Palestinian territories, not to Christians.

With no other viable industry, residents of Bethlehem and its suburbs are dependent on tourism to make a living.

Thousands of pilgrims, mostly Catholic and Orthodox Christians, once journeyed to the Church of the Nativity for midnight mass on Christmas Eve. The road was sometimes backed up three miles from the church to the checkpoint.

But despite the lack of outward signs this year of Christmas in the city where the Saviour was born, Christians look to the spiritual side of the holiday.

“The situation has forced the Christians here to focus on the birth of Jesus, and what Jesus has done for me personally,” Khoury said.

1. The Nissan House, venue of the Christmas party
2. Children sing Christmas songs in Arabic
3. Waiters serve up a delicious array of Middle Eastern foods
4. The reception hall filled with more than 800 guests

The ICEJ celebrates the holiday season

During the festive seasons of Hanukkah and Christmas, the ICEJ staff lit our own Hanukkah lamp and decorated a Christmas tree.
The many Christmases of Israel

As if Israel’s religious fabric wasn’t diverse enough, Christmas is actually celebrated three times among the Christian community in Israel.

Israel’s Christian community, a mere 3 percent of the population, is a microcosm of the world’s Christian diversity, displaying an array of festivals and holidays celebrated in a compact country. Christmas is one major – and slightly confusing – example.

While the majority of the western world celebrates Christmas on December 25, and then Orthodox religions celebrate Christmas Eve on January 6, the Armenian Orthodox in Israel - and only in Israel - celebrate Christmas on January 19 (or on the eve, January 18).

History explains this puzzle. According to the St. Andrew Information Network web site, the Orthodox churches in the Holy Land use the old calendar (which has a difference of twelve days) to determine the date of religious feasts.

So while the 2,500 Armenians in Israel use the Julian calendar and observe Christmas almost a month later than the majority of the world, Armenians in Armenia, like other Orthodox religions, use the new calendar and celebrate on January 6.

Up until the fourth century, all Christian churches celebrated Christmas Eve on January 6 when the Roman church designated December 25 as the day in an attempt to replace the pagan celebration of the Winter Solstice.

But in 1752, a number of days were dropped from the year in the switch from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. Some Christian sects maintained Christmas Day on January 7, previously December 25 of the Julian calendar; others opted for the new December 25.

Since Armenia was not under the Roman Catholic Church, the nation kept the traditional date and continued Christmas Eve celebrations on January 6. The Armenians in Israel, however, continued to observe the original date.

They also take their pick of the holiday festivities.

“The three of them are Christmas for me,” said Aida Aintablian, an Armenian Jerusalem resident. “And also two New Years.” (The Armenian New Year is January 13.)

Aida said her family’s main celebration is on Christmas Eve - January 18. 🎄
“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.”
Isaiah 40:1

Join Grafted in Poland
May 5th 2005 -
let us stand together in love,
march in faith, and believe
God and His promises for the
Nation and people of Israel!

May 5th 2005
The March of the Living is an international, educational program bringing
Jewish teens from all over the world to Poland on Yom Hoshoah (Holocaust
Memorial Day), to march from Auschwitz to Birkenau. The goal - to
learn the lessons of the Holocaust and to lead them into the future vowing,
“Never Again.”

Young Adult Christians from all over the world will be joining with Jewish
youth in Poland on May 5th 2005, to pay tribute to the Holocaust victims
and survivors, and to those who fought so bravely for freedom and democracy
in World War II. This is a unique opportunity given to Young Adult
Christians in order to actively express our support, solidarity and comfort to
the Jewish People.

ICEJ tours will be going from various nations around the world. For more
information about the March of the Living 2005 and how you can be part of
it from your nation, contact the Grafted Team at: grafted@icej.org

Young adults worldwide will be coming to Israel on our Summer Outreach Project, as part
of an active expression of Love and Comfort to the Jewish People living in the Land of Israel.

“This will bless those who bless you, and who-
ever curses you I will curse; and all peoples
on earth will be blessed through you.”
Genesis 12 vs. 3

July 22 - August 2, 2005
Get involved, interact and discuss pertinent issues about Israel and how it relates to you.
For more information, and the full itinerary, contact the Grafted team at: grafted@icej.org
P.O. Box 1192 • Jerusalem 91010 • Israel • Tel: +972 2 5399700 • Fax: +972 2 5669970
A journey to Norilsk

By Erik Selle

I am sitting in my hotel room in Norilsk. The time is 6 a.m., four hours later than St. Petersburg, which I have just left. The drive from Norilsk airport outside the city into town on this day in August was one through death and depression.

Abandoned buildings and apartment blocks neglected and destroyed by time, a smell from smoke and pollution pressing down like a carpet over any life for miles, dead trees and mutilated nature surround us.

Our guide tells us that he once harvested strawberries there. He also tells us about the gulag camps that made this city. The fabrics were handmade by prisoners of the Soviet concentration camps: political prisoners, Christians, Jews and convicted criminals. In the middle of all these impressions my mind raced through the books I’ve read and testimonies I’ve heard that have shaped my role as an intercessor for the former Soviet Union.

So it is here, in the middle of Siberia, a place widely known but scarcely seen by westerners, where Vasily, an ICEJ St. Petersburg staff member, Howard Flower, ICEJ Russia director, and I are on a mission from God. The pastors we visit in Norilsk are right in the midst of a battlefield of thought.
It is clear that the churches are strong here and the message of bringing the Jewish people home to Israel from the far north is warmly received.

Already the Holy Spirit has brought the Christian community close to the Jewish community, and there are close ties on a leadership level as well.

Many Jews have already moved to Israel with help from Christian friends and the Jewish Agency, but many still remain in Russia.

The ICEJ made new friends among the churches here and, more important, new pastors became excited about the Aliyah message. New congregations will now be engaged in the important work of blessing them on their way home to the Holy Land.

We also saw in the meeting with Jews in Siberia, and specifically in meeting with the head of the local Jewish Agency, that the Jewish people are on their way home. A motivation inside them far beyond any Christian “help,” drives them toward Israel.

For us who know the Bible, we understand this is the call of God to His people. The Bible tells us that God himself is calling them home. Therefore the Jewish people will end up in Israel no matter what the church decides to do.

We, as believers, try to make it easier for those who are returning. We shelter them, give them food, transportation, money, love and care.

However I am sensationaly happy during this trip to Norilsk, in the middle of tundra-Siberian-nowhere. Together with believers from all over the world - even in Siberia - we acknowledge God’s calling. Moreover, we witness the miracle working power of God as we move forward in obedience to this call.

To pave the road for Russian Jews seeking to return to Israel, support the work of the ICEJ Aliyah program. Your gift can help ease the way for the Jewish people seeking to relocate to Israel.
In the Bible, the wasteland near the spring where David sought refuge from Saul is called “the wilderness of Ein-Gedi” and the enclosed camps at the top of the mountains, the “strongholds of Ein-Gedi.” It is our desire to seek this same refreshing, as we retreat to the Lord’s oasis in the desert. Join us as we discover new facets of His rest and revelation.

A TIME OF REFRESHING IN MINISTRY FOR THOSE IN WORSHIP LEADERSHIP

Cost: $700 US Individual land package (including accommodation fees, meals, transportation to and from the airport, and tour transportation.)
Bringing education and practical help

*SAP works with town to bring much-needed dental treatment*

*By Nicole Schiavi*

BEIT SHE’AN - David Arama grew up in this historical town in the Jordan valley when pioneers in the 1960s settled the land with minimal resources. Now working for the municipality, Arama sees that little has changed when it comes to dental treatment.

“Parents just put alcohol on their children’s teeth to make the pain go away,” he said, remembering that his parents did the same thing when he was a child. Only back then, there were no dentists in town. “Treatment for teeth is not a luxury, it’s a basic need.”

Arama said that children aware of their parents’ dire economic status are suffering tooth pain silently rather than burden their parents.

The municipality approached ICEJ’s Social Assistance Program (SAP) to help them establish a dental clinic and education programs in the city to reverse this cycle.

With a population of 18,000 Israelis, Beit She’an is comprised of 5,000 homes of which 2,000 are on social welfare. And 600 of them have requested dental assistance.

SAP committed to help contribute to the purchase of dental equipment, estimated at 150,000 shekels (about $3,300). Knowing the critical need for dental care, Nicole Yoder, SAP project manager, said it is one of the top requests her department receives from individuals seeking assistance.

The municipality wants to set up annual dental checkups in the schools for all students. A dentist will be hired by the Ministry of Health to work fulltime in the city and a squat and square three-room building, already owned by the municipality, will serve as the dental clinic.

“This will make life tolerable,” Arama said. “It doesn’t change the mindset of the people, but education will help them break out of the cycle (of poverty).”

If you would like to contribute to the dental health of the poor in Beit She’an, please fill out the enclosed donation form. Should the ICEJ raises surplus funds for this project, the money will be put towards other dental programs in Israel that SAP works with.

The ICEJ’s Social Assistance Program supports people of all backgrounds and religious affiliation throughout the land of Israel, including Jews, Arabs, Druze and Bedouin in a bid to show the love of Jesus to all in need. Please see the enclosed donation form if you would like to support our work financially.
Celebrating life

ICEJ helps make holiday party possible for terror attack victims

EL AVIV – ICEJ’s Social Assistance Program brightened the holidays for children who have been victims of terror attacks by helping make possible a Hanukah party sponsored by an Israeli agency.

Zaka, the victim identification agency always seen at terror attacks sites, also runs projects to help rehabilitation of children hurt in terror attacks. In December, the group hosted a party for these children. And ICEJ’s SAP contributed.

A family from Kfar Darom took an hour and a half to get to the event with their six children. The oldest daughter had been hurt in a terror attack on her way to school.

“The effect of the attack was that the other kids were afraid to go to school for awhile, so it upset the whole family,” she said. “Zaka has helped bring joy and happiness back into the home through these events.”

She said the retreats and parties that Zaka hosts help kids to see for themselves that they are not alone.

Ruth Ovadia, a volunteer for Zaka, said many terror attack victims are afraid to leave their home for a long period of time after the catastrophe. Zaka organizes events, such as this holiday party, which draws them out and gives them something positive to do.

“The lives of these people will never be the same again,” she said. “We’ll never be able to return them to what life was like before, but we can help bring a little light and joy to their lives to help them deal with the trauma.”

Ovadia thanked the ICEJ donors for helping bring about this Hanukah party as a light in a dark time of these children’s lives.

“You helped us bring a smile to the children and to us that’s everything,” she said.

One woman told an SAP staff member that often the families who lost someone get the most attention, while those who are wounded are often forgotten.

“To deal with the constant hospital visits, injury and trauma takes so much energy and affects the whole family,” she said. “These events help take us out of the pain and difficulty for a little while ... it’s like getting a breather.”

ICEJ helps make holiday party possible for terror attack victims
Many items were given to the Social Assistance Program at the Feast of Tabernacles from the visiting pilgrims. We are still sorting and packaging these, but have also begun to distribute bags of clothing and other items.

- One of the Social Welfare Departments in Jerusalem has a 'store' where needy residents can go to choose used clothing for a nominal amount. They were pleased to receive several bags of clothes, telling us that everything given to them in such good condition is a blessing.

- Clothes have also gone to Karmiel where the Jewish aid organisation, WIZO, cares for new immigrants and needy families. There is growing need for clothing in this area and the Director was very thankful to receive a large quantity of men and women's clothing.

- We received a letter on behalf of a shelter for women in Jerusalem, which read, “...thank you for the lovely bedding, towels and tablecloths that you personally delivered to us. You encouraged us greatly...”

- A gift package of baby clothes, toys, and other items was put together and delivered to a couple with 6-year-old twins and who had just had triplets. This would normally be an unusual and special blessing, but their needs are now multiplied. While she juggled crying babies, the wife cried as she shared their story with Claudia who visited them in response to a request for help. This non Jewish couple are in Israel as refugees from Ethiopia. They fled for their lives 12 years ago after a change of government. Their situation has become complex and they now do not receive any financial help.

We were blessed to have the help of Sabine Stamminger from Germany who made order out of our mountain of gifts.

A day of fun

SAP sponsored a day for Israeli Bedouin children to have fun at the Jerusalem Zoo. The children were bussed in from a village in the north in order to expand their cultural experiences within the land. For many of them it was their first time in Jerusalem.
Gina said the new office gives the staff an opportunity to be visible to a large segment of the community. People in the building who never heard of the ICEJ before, have learned of the work done for the Israeli people.

“The Jewish Agency is one floor below us and they came in to observe what we do,” she said. “Finally they asked if we could help the people they couldn’t.”

With a new clientele, Utterback has seen diversified needs and plans to meet them in unique ways. Since the move in November, many soldiers have been referred to the JSC for help. Utterback wants to help them by creating an ‘adopt-a-soldier’ program. Many of the young Russian soldiers have come here alone and at the age where they are required to serve in the army.

JSC serves new immigrants in Jerusalem, helping them get started in their new surroundings and pay urgent medical needs and bills. There are five full-time staff and two part-time.

The year has been one of expansion for the JSC despite several attacks against the organization. Karen (Svetlana)
Milchiker survived a bus bombing practically unscathed while commuting to work as several around her died. Another staffer lost one of her twins while pregnant, but later gave birth to a healthy boy.

While the location is central to downtown action, it is also not immune to terrorist attacks because of the thriving area. But Gina said she has peace about that.

“We believe that this location is exactly where God wants us to be - in the center of the city - and He will protect us,” she said.

JSC November update

- Embrace program
  24 people helped: $3,100

- Food vouchers
  14 families helped: $1,058

- Urgent needs (rent and utilities)
  24 families helped: $4,897

- JSC charges 32 bus passes for new immigrants: $1,975
  Dryer for new immigrant: $620.68

- German rent project
  Four families helped: $462

- ICEJ medical program
  26 people helped: $4,689.66

- Drug addict centre
  20 people helped

Total: 145 people helped at $16,812.34

1. Scott Johnson, head of logistics for the Jerusalem Support Center
2. Working together with local artisans to prepare the offices
3. Mikael, a volunteer applying a fresh coat of paint
4. The new storage room filled with items ready for distribution
5. ICEJ volunteer James Cheatham installing some electrical fittings
6. Tanya Usheovich helping with office administration
7. Gina Utterback handling one of the many requests from the new office

Support the ongoing work of helping new immigrants in Israel! Fill out the enclosed donation form specifying the work of JSC.
A mighty millstone

Arafat burdens his people even from the grave

BY DAVID PARSONS

or those who regarded Yasser Arafat as an obstacle to peace, the warm winds blowing in the Middle East a mere month after his death served as a vindication. While it is too soon to proclaim recent developments a breakthrough towards a comprehensive settlement with Israel, they already bear out that the aged father of Palestinian nationalism was actually weighing down the aspirations of his own people.

FRESH START

Though numerous Arab kings, emirs and potentates lined up to pay homage to Arafat after his death on 11 November, few felt any real remorse at his passing, viewing him as a regional troublemaker over his 35 years at the PLO helm. Syria, Lebanon and Kuwait - countries that for decades pointedly shunned Arafat - wasted little time showing their true sentiments by welcoming his successor, new PLO chairman Mahmoud Abbas, even before the traditional mourning period ended.

The historic PLO fence-mending tour started in Damascus, where the Assad dynasty had once jailed Arafat for not launching terror attacks on their cue, and later declared him persona non grata for striking out on the Oslo path and leaving Syria isolated. The next stop was Beirut, where Abbas sought a better lot for the large Palestinian refugee population, confined to their camps ever since Arafat’s bottomless ‘revolution’ plunged the nation into a 15-year civil war.

Finally, the Abbas delegation was welcomed by Kuwaiti rulers, who despised Arafat, cut off funding to the PLO and expelled over 300,000 Palestinian workers after he openly lauded Saddam Hussein’s 1990 invasion of their country.

By rapidly patching up frayed relations with key Arab states, Abbas - wittingly or not - demonstrated just how self-destructive Arafat’s stewardship of the Palestinian movement had become, costing his people financial and political backing and senseless years of suffering.

WARMING TEND

Meanwhile, Egypt moved just as quickly to begin thawing its ‘cold peace’ with Israel and position itself as a central player in the post-Arafat era. Among other recent actions, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak voiced unprecedented praise for Israeli leader Ariel Sharon as the Palestinians’ best
chance for peace; granted accused Israeli Druse spy Azzam Azzam an early release from prison; concluded agreements with Israel and the US for free trade and special industrial zones; pledged to shut down cross-border arms smuggling to allow IDF withdrawal from the Philadelphia corridor in southern Gaza; and visited Kuwait and other Gulf states to urge that they restore ties and funding to the Palestinian Authority, while also preparing to open relations with Israel.

The suddenly positive atmosphere led to rampant speculation of a behind-the-scenes deal, but a report in Egypt’s leading official daily claiming a comprehensive settlement of the conflict had been reached “in principle” later turned out to be premature.

In truth, Egypt’s new agenda is driven by several factors, though a sudden fondness for Zion is not among them. Cairo is trying to convince other Arab capitals that Arafat’s demise and the re-election of US President George W. Bush have opened a window of opportunity for using Sharon’s disengagement plan as a means to steadily push Israel back to its pre-1967 borders. Parallel with the European Union, Egypt’s strategy is to turn what Sharon intended as a limited unilateral exit from Gaza into a coordinated full-scale retreat from the West Bank as well (plus the Golan, Syria hopes) in accord with the US-sponsored roadmap and Bush’s vision of a Palestinian state living side-by-side with Israel. Sharon’s new coalition partner Shimon Peres and his Labour party also are committed to this very same goal.

Cairo and Damascus are motivated in part by a desire to keep Washington’s focus on the conflict with Israel, thereby deflecting attention away from the desperate need for domestic reforms at home, as called for in the Bush Administration’s democratisation plan for the Arab world.

**BALLOT DEFECT**

Meanwhile, Palestinians finally got their own small taste of democracy with a special presidential election on January 9 to determine Arafat’s successor as head of the PA. With his travels cementing his acceptability abroad, Abbas was considered a runaway winner until jailed Fatah militia leader Marwan Barghouti entered the contest after sensing that Arafat’s “legacy” was endangered by talk of a ceasefire. Almost instantly the popular Barghouti was polling neck-and-neck with Abbas, rallying support behind his calls to prolong the armed intifada.

Due to stiff opposition within Fatah, Barghouti later dropped his candidacy to preserve party unity, but not before winning assent to a list of traditional PLO demands. Throughout the rest of his campaign, Abbas called for East Jerusalem as capital of a future Palestinian state, the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel, release of Palestinian prisoners, a halt to Israel’s targeted killings of militants and an end to work on Israel’s security fence. He also embraced Fatah militia leaders and promised to protect them from the IDF, refused to disarm Hamas, and even referred to Israel as the “Zionist enemy.”

Abbas did label the “militarised” intifada a mistake and sought to negotiate a truce among all Palestinian factions so peace talks can resume. However, his campaign rhetoric gives little hope that he will stand up to those wanting to fight to the bitter end. Having won election, Abbas will now be held to his promise to follow Arafat’s path - using both the gun and the olive branch to achieve Palestinian goals.

The failure of Abbas so far to secure a pan-Palestinian ceasefire exposes a major defect in Palestinian-style democracy: If even one faction decides to opt out by continuing terror attacks against Israel, all the other factions are then under pressure to compete for popularity by shedding Jewish blood. This sad legacy of Yasser Arafat will still burden his people for years to come.

Mahmoud Abbas presides over the first PLO meeting in the post-Arafat era.
For many in our movement, which by the way is not a new phenomenon or theological position in the church, the Biblical credentials undergirding the return of the Jewish people to the Holy Land are found within that body of Scripture that we refer to as prophetic by nature. That is, the assertion is made that the major and minor prophets foretold these events.

While much of this is true, it is also nevertheless true that these prophetic passages do not constitute the Biblical foundations upon which Biblical Christian Zionism stands. In addition it must also be stated that the movement is also not “driven” by some bizarre longing for Armageddon and therefore see the restoration of Israel as a vital step to this end.

In actual fact the Biblical credentials of Biblical Zionism are found in a unique promise of covenant that God made with Abraham some 4,000 years ago. This covenant that God made with Abraham was the dawn of the redemptive initiative that has culminated with the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Essentially it amounts to a promise to save the world through the Jewish people. “In you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3). Jesus and Paul echoed this reality when they said, “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22) and “We share in their spiritual things” (Romans 15:27) respectively.

In actual fact, the Abrahamic Covenant bequeathed to the Jewish people a role in history as custodians of the word of God (Romans 3:1) that has never been removed from them (Romans 11:29). This role can be summed up as to serve the world with “redemptive products.” It can also be argued from scripture that the Abrahamic Covenant alone could not deliver the salvation of the world as God promised in it. It was therefore given authority, power and ability by the additions (Galatians 3:19) of the Mosaic and New Covenants to it.

So, scripture affirms that John the Baptist and Jesus came in order to fulfill the promises that God made in the Covenant with Abraham (Luke 1:54-55; Luke 1:72-75). Paul makes the same conclusion when he says in Romans 15:8-9 that Jesus came to make good the promises that God made to the founding fathers (patriarchs) of Israel.

It is this covenant or promise that God made with Abraham that also bequeathed to Israel the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession (Genesis 17:8-9). Without land, the nation of Israel could never be formed and because of the land, God’s redemptive initiative on behalf of the world could be and has been executed. Israel has the land as an everlasting possession for the blessing of the world.

For instance, her total destruction in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the region would have frustrated the redemptive purpose of God. This has always been the intention of the powers of darkness. Thankfully, as is the case now, a remnant returned 70 years later to their ancient homeland and as a consequence the Messiah Jesus came. This, as we have seen, according to Luke, is fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Messiah will come again in the future because of the Abrahamic Covenant. Of this we can be sure! God does not undertake “half jobs!” The conclusion of His redemptive promise and initiative that began with Abraham will be the resurrection of the dead (Daniel 12:1-3).

Israel’s return to Canaan in our time is because of God’s promises to Abraham. She is on a journey that will witness the dealings of God with her in matters relating to justice, truth, mercy, righteousness and redemption. All these issues regulate her possession of the Holy Land and how much of it she will live on. Not until she reaches the point of redemption will all of the land promised to her be hers (Ezekiel 36:24-28).

Until that day dawns, we must place our spiritual feet upon the foundation outlined above and we must embrace our calling to pray for Israel, comfort Israel and declare God’s word to her.

Our love must equally “fall upon” all the peoples of the region and, as our Feast speaker put it, “If we don’t have a heart for the Arab peoples of the region, we don’t really have a heart for Israel and we don’t reflect God’s heart!”

Biblical Zionism and its foundations

By Malcolm Hedding
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