A NEW DAY DAWNING

HERALDING THE START OF A NEW YEAR

In the day of prosperity be joyful,
But in the day of adversity consider:
Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other,
So that man can find out nothing that will come after him.
Ecclesiastes 7:14
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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THEOLOGICALLY SPEAKING

A biblical stand: The right of domicile on the land
An Iranian holds an anti-Israel poster during an “al-Quds Day” rally on Friday Oct. 28, 2005 in Tehran. Tens of thousands of Iranians staged anti-Israel protests across the country and repeated calls by their ultraconservative president demanding the Jewish state’s destruction. World leaders have condemned remarks made by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who repeated the words of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, founder of Iran’s Islamic revolution, by saying: “Israel must be wiped off the map.” (AP Photo/Hasan Sarbakhshian)
Dear Friends,

As the New Year begins, so does world uncertainty. Of particular note are the “sayings” of Iran’s new president. He not only calls for the destruction of Israel but in addition he denies the existence of the Holocaust and believes that a Jewish State should be established in Europe. The eternal homeland of the Jewish people must become “Judenrein”!

Just over sixty years ago another radical despot called Adolf Hitler called for the same “final solution” and implemented it when it became clear that the world would do nothing.

It is therefore unthinkable that our world would so easily digest and put up with President Ahmadinejad’s rantings and ravings. In light of the evil of the Third Reich, action should immediately be taken by the United Nations and other world bodies like the European Union. Speaking is not enough, no matter how tough it may be. Action is needed and this should include the dismantling of Iran’s nuclear programme.

People like Ahmadinejad mean what they say and cannot be shrugged off. They have the “machinery and mechanism of state” to back up their threats and will not hesitate to use them.

Again this brings into focus the evil powers that “drive” anti-Semitism. This historic problem has its roots in an attempt to frustrate the divine redemptive purpose for the world played out in time through the Jewish people. Jesus said, “Salvation is of the Jews”. This has never changed and thus the contest unfolding before our eyes will continue. However, one thing is sure, one will have to remove God from His throne before Israel is removed from the earth!

President Ahmadinejad, though to be taken seriously, will fail and like all the other tyrants of history, will vanish. In the end Israel will emerge secure and redeemed. Our function is to pray for her and speak out on her behalf. This too is a task that is everywhere opposed but it is biblical and it will enjoy the blessing of God.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem wishes you a very blessed New Year and thanks you, yet again, for standing with us.

Yours in Jesus,

Malcolm Hedding
For five years now, Christmas has been a no-show in Bethlehem. Manger Square was turned into a rallying point for radical Islamic militiamen waging an armed intifada against Israel. Christmas trees have been decorated with pictures of Palestinian ‘martyrs.’ For those Arab Christians who now live in the town where the Nativity story took place, it has been hard to pierce the gloom and celebrate Christ’s birth.

“Christmas? There was no Christmas in Bethlehem the past couple of years,” says Stephen Khoury, a native Baptist pastor in his early thirties. “The people had no hope. But the town seems determined to recover the holiday spirit this year.”

To help bring aid and comfort to Christians in Bethlehem, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, through our Social Assistance Program, has made a generous gift to the church pastored by Stephen and his father, Rev. Naim Khoury. The funds are being used to sponsor a community Christmas dinner for some 800 congregants and guests, as well as to buy presents for the children and food vouchers to start the new year for many of the families.

Because of Palestinian terrorism, Bethlehem is now an island surrounded by a security barrier and few can enter Israel for work. Local jobs are scarce, the Muslim majority tends not to hire Christians, and the economic lifeline of tourism has been reduced to a trickle.

As a result, 90% of the Christians in Bethlehem are unemployed.

Thus, there is an ongoing lack here that will need our combined prayers and generosity in the days ahead.

Recently, the ICEJ also sent a team of 15 staff members and friends to visit the Khoury’s church in Bethlehem and work on a youth center they operate in the neighboring Christian town of Beit Sahur. The work team cleaned the center outside and in, and prepared the garden area for playground equipment that was installed soon afterwards.

Ziad, a local born-again believer from the town known for the traditional Shepherd’s Field, runs the youth center.
in Beit Sahur and explains that it is so vital in the life and faith of the community there.

“Children from other church backgrounds even come here to play in the afternoons and learn Bible lessons that they take home to their families,” says Ziad. “One set of Orthodox parents warned their son to be careful what we taught here, but he reported back to them that we only give the truth from the Bible.”

The center has rooms for games and activities, but the main rooms are used for the Bible teachings, and the bookshelves are lined with scores of booklets and materials in Arabic written for young believers in the Lord.
At the end of November/beginning of December the Israel delegation of the European Union visited Jerusalem on a fact finding/updating mission. Since the European Coalition for Israel is registered in Brussels it became possible for Dr Jürgen Bühler, our International Director, to address this delegation at a special breakfast gathering.

Dr Bühler has put together a very well researched document on EU funding of the Palestinian Authority in which he outlines the very serious problems in this regard and calls for a “moral funding solution”. He also commends the European Union for initiatives that have been put in place whereby accounting problems of the past have been addressed and rectified and initiatives have been put in place to bring about greater accountability and transparency in the future.

The “submission” by Dr Bühler was enthusiastically received by all who attended the breakfast and since then calls have been made to make the paper more widely available to other NGO’s and political organizations in Europe. For instance, it has already been presented to a fact finding mission of the Foreign Affairs committees of the British House of Commons.

More important still is the fact that the high standard of the paper prompted the delegation’s vice-chair Monica Benova to invite Dr Jürgen Bühler back to Brussels to address the delegation of the European Parliament on the issue.

This all goes to show that unity can achieve important breakthroughs on behalf of Israel. The unity of the five Christian organizations that make up the Coalition is to be cherished and developed.
ICEJ partners with Jerusalem Post to publish a Christian Edition

Malcolm Hedding of the ICEJ and Moshe BarZvi of the Jerusalem Post share a moment of accomplishment and joy as they hold their new joint venture project; The Jerusalem Post Christian Edition.

Lieutenant Governor Mary Fallin of the State of Oklahoma visits ICEJ

The Oklahoma Israel Exchange and the Jewish Federation of Oklahoma brought a solidarity mission group to Israel in early December. The Lieutenant Governor of the State of Oklahoma, Mary Fallin, was part of the delegation. A special reception was held for the group at the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.
Dr. Reg McDaniel, Medical Director of MannaRelief Ministries, delivers a lecture to a mixed audience of Medical, NGO, and various Christian Organizations’ personnel at the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem during a 10 day lecture series in Israel.

The ICEJ and MannaRelief Ministries are exploring ways of helping the needy of the region with glyconutrient supplement and enhancement of the daily dietary needs.

**ICEJ & ICCC Partnership**

Strategic Partners for developing business in Israel from the “Christian World”, ICCC – International Christian Chamber of Commerce and ICEJ - International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, share an information booth at “The Prime Minister’s Conference for Export and International Cooperation” in Tel Aviv. Left to Right: Franklin Linker, ICEJ Accounting Coordinator; Timothy King, ICEJ Financial Director; Claus Philippin, V. P. and Treasurer ICCC; Brian Cape, CEO.
A journey through Finland

BY MALCOLM HEDDING

At the beginning of December, Malcolm Hedding, our Executive Director, and Chuck King, our Music Director traveled to Helsinki, Finland to attend, speak at and direct the worship and musical presentation of the ICEJ Finland’s Feast of Tabernacles celebration.

At this time of the year the snow begins to fall in much of Finland, bringing with it a spectacular sense of light against the backdrop of Finland’s dark and long winter nights. As we watched the snow tumbling down, we witnessed how easily light dispels the darkness and makes everything beautiful.

Herein is an important teaching, as children of the light we share God’s light and love with a dark world so, as we gathered in Helsinki a light shone that told of God’s love for a lost world and of His plan to bring this light to the world through Israel. The presence of Jesus filled the hall and coupled with dancing, singing, music and preaching it radiated to all of our hearts.

Thereafter Chuck returned to Israel but Malcolm continued preaching in some of the churches of Finland, telling of God’s wondrous love for a lost and broken world. His traveling companions were Juha Ketola, Ulla Järviilehto and her husband, Kaarlo. What made these times precious was not only the meetings but the fellowship of God’s children as they seek to serve Him.

Just as this snow remains on the ground as a deposit of light so the precious Word of God in word and song will remain in Finland, bringing illumination and joy. 🌈

Juha Ketola and Malcolm Hedding speaking in Helsinki

Chuck King with choir in Helsinki
A New Day
By Jürgen Bühler

2004, Israel’s most important annual political conference, a well known Rabbi declared in front of many Knesset members and senior economical leaders: “Our best friends and allies today are bible believing Christians. These evangelicals are the fastest growing religious group in the world. They believe in the Bible, they believe that Jesus is the Messiah and they all love Israel!” Full of determination he demanded, “We need to give these people a seat at our table!”

Open Doors

In a very practical way this can already be seen in the Christian Allies Caucus, where a multi partisan group of Knesset members meet regularly with the leading Zionist organizations in the land, including the ICEJ. The new caucus is not only a new form of dialogue but has already facilitated various aid projects for the needy in Israel.

In this issue we report about a new partnership with the Jerusalem Post which would have been an unthinkable development a few years ago. It is a miracle that the oldest English daily in Israel is reaching out towards the world wide Christian community! In the midst of all the political troubles and increasing international pressure, a new and unseen level of friendship and trust is developing between Christians and Jews. The founding mandate God gave to the ICEJ, “Comfort ye my people” is bearing fruit in a new encouraging way. We see this as part of God’s restoration process with His people. God has placed us here in Jerusalem to be part of this great work and we call upon the nations to assist us in this love of God. We call upon you to help us to go through the new open doors.

A Tragic Heritage

For many years the relationship between Jews and Christians was characterized by deep distrust. The often bloody history of the Jews taught them to be more suspicious of Christians than Muslims. Be it the massacres during the 11th century crusades, the expulsions and pogroms of Europe or finally the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust, it has been the Christians who have persecuted them the most – often fulfilling their mission of hatred in the very name of Jesus Christ. Therefore, until today, it has been difficult for many Jews to fully trust Christians.

Friends in Time of Need

However it seems that a new chapter is opening in Jewish Christian relationships, especially here in Israel. More than two decades of activities of Christian Zionist groups, like the ICEJ, is now bearing fruit in a new dimension. During the recent Intifada the Israeli public realized that the only tourists who still visited the land were Evangelical Christians. During the Herzliya Conference

"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."

Isaiah 43:19

A road through the desert bringing restoration and joy.
JERUSALEM – If you ever want to try a coffee shop with a twist, head to Café on the Rails in the German Colony. The coffee is made with an Italian espresso maker, most of the desserts are homemade and the garden seating is priceless.

But none of that is what makes this café special. The twist is that the customer is served by a staff of mentally handicapped staff.

Akim-Jerusalem, a non-profit parents’ association providing services to people with mental disabilities and developmental disorders, runs this café. The café was created three years ago, a model program in Israel.

“It was a subtle way to reverse the norm,” said Stefan Rothschild, social worker and deputy director of Akim-Jerusalem. “We have somehow been able to create an island of peace here.”

Rothschild explained how giving jobs such as waiting tables to low-level mentally handicapped people provides them with dignity and identification. They learn how to dress respectfully, are attentive to their social surroundings and do something of which their parents can be proud.

He cited a real example as a waitress put a bottle of soda on his table while he spoke to Word From Jerusalem.

“Okay, so she didn’t pour, she put the bottle on the table,” he said. “But that she treats you as a customer … she has come a long way to get here.”

And the actual workers speak well of the program, saying nothing compares to the fun they have working at Café on the Rails.

“I miss the work when it’s closed, there’s nothing to do,” said Sharon, aged 30.

His brother Moti, aged 35, enthusiastically agreed.

“This is the most normal place in Jerusalem,” said Moti.
The program doesn’t just benefit the mentally handicapped. Rothschild said it helps to reverse the estrangement society feels from the handicapped. He said the program, supported by ICEJ’s Social Assistance Program, can’t reverse the illness, but it can improve the existence of those who have it and those who come into contact with them.

“There was a reason for this guy to be born, and the reason, I believe, was to give me a chance to be good to him,” Rothschild said.

The café is open seasonally, from April to October or by appointment for tour groups.

Russian Aliyah from Kaliningrad through Poland

By Howard Flower

Three years ago the Jewish Agency contacted Howard Flower of ICEJ Russia, requesting assistance with the transportation of Jewish families from the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, located along the Baltic Sea between Poland and Lithuania. Previously these families had been flying to Israel by way of Copenhagen but airfares had risen and a more efficient route was sought. There was a direct flight from Warsaw, Poland, south of Kaliningrad but the problem was how to get the families there. As the ICEJ had experience in bussing Jewish people to airports, especially the St. Petersburg to Helsinki route, the Jewish Agency asked for our help.

Howard immediately sent Vasily Pokrovskiy, our lead Russian fisherman, and Pastor Jim Cuisick from Melbourne Florida to Kaliningrad and they escorted the first family in a van to Warsaw, Poland. The couple they escorted on this first trip was Zheniya and Andrey Krukov who were students in the Music Academy. They had lived in a dormitory in Kaliningrad and when Zhenya became pregnant, they made their decision to move to Israel. The baby was born in Israel soon after their arrival.

They arrived at Warsaw airport ahead of time. Waiting for the security check in the airport cafe Zhenya asked why Christians would help Jews, who they believed had crucified their God. This question gave the perfect opportunity to share with Zhenya about the Jewish - Christian relationship and the ICEJ mission in Kaliningrad-Warsaw.
This trip was set up by the Jewish Agency’s local coordinator, Svetlana. The Jewish Agency in Kaliningrad rents office space in a former German prison building. Svetlana heads the office and Igor, a retired Air Force pilot, assists. They believe that there are up to three thousand Jews in the Kaliningrad area. Svetlana says most of the Jewish families are not concerned about the unrest in the Middle East because life is so hard for them in Kaliningrad.

After the first trip the numbers grew rapidly. Sometimes a 40 seater bus was needed to take all the Olim to Warsaw, and some months there were two trips. This year the aliyah numbers are much higher than other areas of the FSU – and almost triple the figure for 2004.

Aliyah numbers in Russia had been in decline since the beginning of the current intifada but now there is an upward trend. The aliyah numbers in the Northwest region are up 35% over 2004 and in Kaliningrad they are up more than 150% over 2004.

The Kaliningrad operation has become a textbook example of how Christian fishing should operate: A strong and efficient Sohknut (JAFI) coordinator working closely with the local Jewish community; and in cooperation with local volunteer Christian fishermen like Pastor Andrei Vostryakov and his wife Tanya.
Uzbekistan fishers

Our fishers in Uzbekistan work closely with Jewish families seeking to make aliyah

By Sergey Gonchar

SOPHIA FREIDLENDER

Our fishers in Uzbekistan work closely with Jewish families seeking to make aliyah to Israel.

Sophia Freidlender is a widow with three daughters and one grandson. She works as a street cleaner and her daughters work in a car terminal, washing cars to make some money.

In April 2005 one of her daughters was rushed to hospital with appendicitis. The surgery cost US$50. Sophia cried and explained that this was beyond their means. The surgeon agreed to charge US$30 but this was still an impossible amount for her to pay. Sophia phoned Farhad, our fisher, to ask his help in saving her daughter’s life. Immediately he provided the money and also paid for all the medication.

Now suddenly the family has received a letter from a long lost cousin in Israel, who wrote to tell them that she is still alive. After surviving a lifetime of troubles, including the Holocaust, she has settled in Israel and is inviting Sophia and her family to join her.

MARINA BABILEVA

Marina Babileva and her twin daughters, Maria and Anna, have an extremely difficult life. Her husband was in prison for 8 years for drug trafficking and is a drug user. He is a continual problem for Marina and the girls. He is unemployed with no papers.

When ICEJ Finland’s Dr Ulla Järvelähto and Serguei Popov visited last year, they reached out to Marina and paid off her huge debt of heating, water and electricity bills. Marina and the girls also receive aid in foodstuffs.

After Farhad helped her husband to obtain a passport, by paying a penalty and all the necessary fees, Marina asked her husband if he would allow her to take the girls and to go to Israel and he agreed. However, the consul at the Israeli Embassy has asked her to contact her brother and aunts in Israel to present papers as a proof of their Jewish roots but this is proving difficult. Family members in Israel are often hesitant to help relatives still in the former Soviet Union, in case they are expected to assist financially. Olga, a fisher, was in Israel this summer and contacted Marina’s brother. He said he would give her the papers, but then disappeared and changed his phone number. One of Marina’s aunts in Israel claims that she is too old to remember all her relatives and cannot go to the office with papers; another one was ready to help Marina to make Aliyah but then suddenly immigrated to USA.

In the meantime, Marina washes dishes at a café to make ends meet. Please pray that God will make a way for her to go to Israel.

OLGA VEDERNIKOVA

For more than a year, Olga Vedernikova has spoken with our fishers about moving to Israel but as she is 70 years old, she had doubts because of her age. Her son lives in Israel and has finally persuaded his mother to join him, so she is in process now. Farhad, our fisher, is assisting her in dealing with the small details of her Aliyah.
Partner with us
Become a patron of the ICEJ

The ICEJ is proud to announce that 13 people responded to the Patron Pledge Program of support for the Embassy’s work for 2006 during the Feast of Tabernacles Celebration in Jerusalem. More and more World Disasters are demanding financial help from the Christian and philanthropic communities in unprecedented ways. If Israel loving supporters of the ICEJ do not make a commitment to keep the Embassy’s programs strong and meaningful, who will? Please consider making a pledge of support to the Embassy Patron Program for 2006.

GOLD PATRON
For Patrons who pledge to give $25,000 or more annually

SILVER PATRON
For Patrons who pledge to give $10,000 or more annually

BRONZE PATRON
For Patrons who pledge to give $5,000 or more annually

Should you desire to become a patron, please fill in the printed pledge form on this page and send it to the ICEJ, PO Box 1192, Jerusalem 91010, Israel.

All Gold, Silver and Bronze Patrons will receive special gifts

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN EMBASSY JERUSALEM
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Yes, I would like to become a Patron of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. I therefore elect to become:

☐ A Gold Patron ($25,000)
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“Comfort ye, comfort ye My people .....”
Isaiah 40:1-2
Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was poised to take the fate of the nation of Israel upon his broad shoulders in elections slated for late March, but his last mission now appears to be over, as the military legend and political heavyweight suffered a grave stroke in early January that has thrown Israel into turmoil.

As we go to press, Sharon is still fighting for his life but authorities are assessing that it is likely his political career is over. This has been an immense shock to the nation, and the electoral map must now be totally re-calculated. In recent years, Sharon emerged as a lone towering figure with both military and peace credentials, drawing broad support for his vision on how to lead the country forward.

Sharon was never one for standing still. “Tell them he is a man of action more than words,” his veteran campaign manager Lior Horev once advised me, just moments before Sharon was introduced to speak at the Feast of Tabernacles in October 2000 – his first public address following that now famous visit to the Temple Mount. His handler understood well that Sharon’s reputation was built not on gifted oratory, but rather on daring deeds that stirred others to follow.

How fitting then the name of the new party he leaves behind – Kadima, meaning “forward.” And judging by the polls, it seemed many Israelis were prepared to follow, even if Sharon told them very little about where he wanted to take them.

LOOSE TALK

When Sharon’s government collapsed in the wake of the Gaza disengagement last fall, Israelis were forced back to the ballot box in an election that many viewed as a national referendum on further withdrawals from Judea/Samaria. Sharon left Likud and formed a new centrist faction that was polling well ahead of his former party on the right and Labour on the left, despite the fact that he had yet to lay out Kadima’s platform.

Publicly, Sharon’s closest aides stated that he considered it his “historic mission” – as one of the last remaining leaders of Israel’s founding generation – to draw the nation’s final borders. Yet the incumbent prime minister had decided not to compromise Israel’s bargaining position in any future negotiations with the Palestinians by defining in this campaign which major settlement blocs and security zones in the West Bank he was prepared to give away and which he would seek to annex.

Some of Kadima’s more prominent figures, however, were talking as if they knew exactly where he was headed.
Justice Minister Tzippi Livni, a rising star in the new party, divulged that she believes Israel’s separation fence, skirting just inside the pre-1967 ‘Green Line,’ will serve as “the future border of the state of Israel.”

Transportation Minister Meir Sheetrit, who also followed Sharon from Likud into Kadima, then insisted that not a “single additional house” should be built in Judea and Samaria because the “true Zionism of tomorrow” is to settle the Galilee and the Negev.

Sharon’s leading pollster later told Newsweek that the prime minister would be willing to concede 90% of the West Bank and compromise on east Jerusalem if it would achieve a lasting peace with the Palestinians.

Growing a bit perturbed by all the loose cannons, Sharon brusquely dismissed the Newsweek report, saying it was “utter nonsense and that the only plan that Israel would follow is the road map,” referring to the internationally-backed plan for Palestinian statehood. “Jerusalem,” he added, would remain “Israel’s capital forever.”

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

Going on 78 and very overweight, Sharon suffered a mild stroke in mid-December, signalling that he might not have much time left to complete his quest of setting Israel’s permanent borders. Labour luminary Shimon Peres, a grand 82, was in the same boat, and joined Kadima expecting something ‘historic’ from Sharon fairly quickly himself.

But most Israelis realised that the continuing limbo of some 9,000 Jewish evacuees from Gaza demonstrates the country is ill prepared right now to handle the trauma of relocating the 60,000 or so West Bank settlers living on the ‘wrong side’ of the security fence.

Furthermore, if Sharon indeed aimed to follow the US-backed road map peace plan, he had always insisted on adhering to its call for the Palestinian Authority to disarm terrorist groups as a precursor to the final status negotiations on settlements, borders and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

That precondition is unlikely to happen anytime soon. The PA’s ruling Fatah party is in serious disarray and has shown no will or ability to begin dismantling the radical terror militias in its midst. The Palestinian populace considers Fatah’s senior leadership as hopelessly corrupt, while its most popular leader on the street, Marwan Barghouti, is serving five life terms in an Israeli prison.

Based on their recent strong showings in municipal races, Hamas thus looks poised to capture perhaps half the seats in PA parliamentary elections slated to take place in late January – that is unless an anxious Fatah cancels the vote.

Hamas leaders are on record as saying they will use their new status as an official political player to finally dispose of Oslo and any chance of direct negotiations with Israel. One senior IDF analyst foresees an eventual Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip and West Bank that would include the establishment of a strict Islamic regime and a much larger terror “army.”

BLANK CHECK

No doubt, developments on the Palestinian side in January were already primed to heavily impact the Israeli elections in March. Only once it became clear who is in charge – if anyone – on the Palestinian side, would the choice before Israeli voters crystallise.

But the loss of Sharon has brought a sudden and immense shock to the Israeli political equation. Many were ready to put their trust in him as the lone figure capable of making momentous decisions about their future. He would have interpreted a victory in March as carte blanche to redraw the map of Israel.

But those plans are riddled with uncertainty now. The towering personality of Sharon was the ‘glue’ holding together the hastily assembled patchwork of Kadima, and it is unclear whether acting prime minister Ehud Olmert can ensure its cohesion and sustain its impressive polling numbers over the next two months.

Of all the many missions assigned to Sharon in this life, drawing Israel’s final borders apparently was not one of them.
A biblical stand on Zionism – Part 2

BY MALCOLM HEDDING AND JÜRGEN BÜHLER

TWO SIDES, ONE COIN

The biblical doctrine of the land is a twofold one, with each principle representing one side of the same coin.

The two principles are:

a) The land belongs to the Jewish people without a doubt. God expresses this throughout the scripture through many promises, confirmed through a covenant.

b) The right of domicile on the land and the right to enjoy the blessings of that land are based on Israel's spiritual condition.

We have to look at both sides in order to keep us from taking an unbalanced and extremist view. If we neglect the first principle and focus purely on the required righteousness (which is not yet achieved by large parts of Israel) we are in danger of slipping on the path of replacement theology, and possibly anti-Semitism. If on the other hand we neglect the second principle and focus solely on the land issue, we are tempted to embrace a right-wing nationalist agenda and our cause of Zionism is not biblical but political.

HISTORICAL VERIFICATION

These two principles are verified within the whole course of Israel's history. Whenever Israel followed their God and had God-fearing kings, the borders of Israel enlarged quickly and with ease, as the writer of Chronicles puts it: “... and the LORD brought the fear of him [David] upon all nations.” The neighbouring people subdued themselves under the rulership of Israel and paid tributes.

Yet as soon as Israel and its kings left their God, it was God himself who raised the neighbouring countries against them stirring up resistance from within and even adjusting the borders of Israel's territory. “In those days the LORD began to cut off parts of Israel; and Hazael conquered them in all the territory of Israel.” Often the adversaries of Israel were rendered powerless as soon as Israel humbled herself under the hand of God. But as their tragic history tells us, the enemies of Israel were allowed to uproot the chosen people from the Holy Land twice.

In short: Israel in her entire history never had a conflict over borders or land issues, but Israel found herself in a constant conflict with her God! Out of that, political and military troubles arose which threatened the security and very existence of the nation. But as soon as Israel sought the Lord, He himself became a fiery wall around his people.

STOCKTAKING

The modern restoration of the state of Israel is without doubt the greatest miracle of modern history. Be it the return of the Jews from more than 100 nations, the replanting of the land or the reconstruction of the cities of Israel, they all carry the clear watermark of fulfilled biblical promises.

However Israel returns today to their land largely as a secular people, which barely differs hardly from any other nation. It is only a small minority in Israel which sees the hand of God in its restoration. It is mostly the pioneering spirit of the founding fathers, the supremacy of the IDF or other human achievements which are named as the creating source of modern Israel. High abortion rates, entanglement in eastern religions and open moral decline characterize the Israel of today.

God will therefore use corrective measures in order to gain the attention of His chosen people. Like a loving father disciplines his children, so also God will judge His people in order to correct them and draw them finally to Himself. This can mean that for a limited time God might adjust the borders of the land and that the pressure on God's people will even increase.

One thing, however, is for sure: God is not going to uproot his people. God did not restore Israel in order to exile her again, but rather to reconcile her to Himself. All biblical accounts on the end-time restoration of Israel end with a picture painted by Paul: “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

CONCLUSION

Consequently the question of the boundaries of the land of Israel cannot be understood outside the context of Israel's spiritual condition. As the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem we therefore take the following position:

1. We wish to affirm that the land of Canaan is the everlasting possession of the Jewish people. No other people have a biblical right to this land. It belongs to the Jewish people by divine covenant. Nevertheless Israel's right of domicile is dependent on her reconciled relationship with her God. According to Ezekiel 36:24-28, only a nation anointed by the spirit of God affords her the right to dwell in the land. This day is coming, albeit through a process of affliction.

2. Given that the Jewish people have returned to Israel as a secular people, correction and judgement are to be expected. Remember, domicile is conditional upon
Israel’s reconciled relationship with her God. It is naïve for Christians to stand on God’s Word concerning all the land bequeathed to her when she remains largely unfaithful to God. Land shrinkage is God’s doing since He is determined to correct and save her.

3. However, since God in His Word has only promised two exiles and two returns and since these have already taken place, He is now determined to save her through affliction. She will not be exiled again!

4. If Israel is therefore going to lose land, do not be amazed at this. Rather embrace your responsibility to pray for her righteousness and salvation, knowing these alone will secure her domicile upon all of the land bequeathed to her. God has promised to save her.

5. God’s process of dealing with Israel does not legitimize those like the PLO, Hamas, etc. who are actively working for Israel’s destruction. We speak out against this evil and we must stand against all forms of anti-Semitism.

6. We must warn our nations not to be part of any scheme to divide the land! Judgement and correction are a divine prerogative. We must stand with Zion, help her, defend her and speak out on her behalf.

7. If God should allow that further parts of the land of Israel be relinquished, we fully understand the sorrow it will bring for many settlers who will be uprooted. We pray for them and do our utmost to comfort, support them and give them hope.

8. We must recognise that a great visitation of God is also coming to the Arab world. The Word of God promises a great revival among the neighbouring countries of Israel.

---

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