“I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth...”

Ezekiel 16:60
The ICEJ headquarters in Jerusalem

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 among 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 website at http://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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PUBLISHER
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem
20 Rachel Imenu, PO Box 1192, Jerusalem 91010, Israel
Tel.: +972-2-5399700, Fax.: +972-2-5669970
Email: icej@icej.org  Internet: www.icej.org

Executive Director: Malcolm Hedding
International Director: Michael Utterback
Finance Director: Timothy King
Head of Media & Publications: David Parsons
Layout & Design: Jean Tofte
Administration: Doron Schneider
Photos: Sherwood Burton, AP
Printed in Israel by: Meiri Printers
Distribution from Israel: Global Mail
Other Contributors: Jürgen Bühler, Michael Hines, Shannon McMillan, Kathy Rowlands, Lisa Rüdiger, Emily Schiavi, Nicole Schiavi
Dear Friends:

As Israel celebrates yet another year of independence, we marvel more and more at the grace and mercy of God since if it were not for these, there would not be a Jewish State today. Global hostility, anti-Semitism and outright antagonism toward the nation of Israel demonstrate yet again that her modern-day restoration has nothing to do with the will of humankind. It has everything to do with the timing and purpose of God.

This timing and purpose of God cannot be frustrated by the raging of nations. What the God of Heaven has begun, He will finish and through this process all men everywhere will be humbled, including Christendom and even Israel herself. Most important of all will be the fact that the Word of God will be totally vindicated and with it all those who by faith have clung to it.

The Book of Hebrews declares that it is by faith and patience that we do inherit the promises of God. These promises so impact our souls by the power of His Spirit that they turn into faith and become in themselves the evidence of things not seen.

So, in spite of all the conflict in Israel and troubles in the wider region, our joy is in knowing that God’s Word will not fail. He has promised to:

- Bring Israel back from the nations;
- Plant her in the land of her forefathers;
- Give her a new heart to know and follow Him;
- Vanquish her enemies; and
- Redeem her.

This process of God will have major implications for the wider world. That is implications of blessing, though the nations are presently blinded to it. In “the restoration of all things” concerning Israel, the nations will eventually experience a fuller redemption, their deliverance from the scourge of war and true peace!

The prayer battle for Israel is thus the prayer battle for the blessing of the whole world. “Yom Hatzmaut”, or Israel’s Day of Independence, is thus more than an annual event on the calendar. In reality it looks back to the faithfulness of God, it looks presently at the purpose of God and it looks forward to the blessing of God. Of this we can all be sure!

Reflecting on God’s faithfulness to Israel down through time can be very encouraging to our own faith and prayer life. In this regard, the musical The Covenant reminds us of God’s abiding care over His people with incredible beauty and power.

We just finished another successful tour of Israel with this musical and had a professional film crew capture it live for new videos and DVDs that are now available through our Resources department. May I say that it is probably the most outstanding video production we have ever done and I recommend it to all our friends.

Yours in Jesus,

Malcolm Hedding

Executive Director of the ICEJ
Inside the Embassy

THE COVENANT
A Sensation!

Encore Tour Draws Crowds All Across Israel

If Israeli teachers were looking for a way to get schoolchildren interested in their nation’s history, they found it in the Christian Embassy’s latest production of the musical The Covenant.

An estimated 9,000 Israelis saw this inspiring drama during its hugely successful second tour of the country in Hebrew during March. The encore tour included 12 performances in seven Israeli cities and featured special matinees for school students and IDF soldiers.

Children also played a greater role in Ha Brit (its Hebrew name), as about half of the volunteer cast consisted of teen-agers and younger children. Key solos were sung by two youngsters under 10 years old, while 7- and 10-month-old infants played baby Moses and other characters.

The youngsters on stage left a deep impression on those in the audience, especially at the clear highlight of the tour, a special afternoon show in Jerusalem for 2,000 students from area schools.

Invited to see the show as part of their education, the schoolchildren sat in rapt attention as a 70-minute history lesson of the Jewish people unfolded on the stage before them.

Accompanying teachers and parents came not quite knowing what to expect, but they went away astounded when the students suddenly insisted they wanted to learn about the Bible.

Written by Robert and Elizabeth Muren, The Covenant recounts the story of the People of Israel from God’s covenant with Abraham until the founding of the modern State.

The Covenant features biblical stories from Abraham’s calling to Jesus forgiving the woman caught in adultery. It also touches on life in the Diaspora, the Holocaust, and the Jewish return to their ancient homeland.

Building on the success of last year’s debut tour, the ICEJ wanted to again bring the play’s inspiring message to Israelis, to reassure them that they are not alone during this difficult time for the entire country.

Shahar Maayan, 22, said The Covenant reinforced to him that the history of the Jewish people has always been in the hands of God.

“I feel more secure because there is a God that is guiding us all the time and that makes me feel a lot better about living in Israel at this time”, he said. “If you have people come from abroad to tell you that you have the right to be here and that they love Israel, it makes me feel proud.”

Almost everyone left the musical with tears and an outpouring of gratitude to the cast, who greeted
Inside the Embassy

The audience outside after each performance.

“I feel special to be Jewish”, Tovit Lichi, 28, said after seeing The Covenant for the first time.

It was no small task to fill the many auditoriums reserved across the land. But as the tour made its way around the country, its popularity spread to a point where audience members were demanding that additional performances be staged at once, so they could bring their friends.

Helping to build this momentum was Doron Schneider, an Israeli in the ICEJ’s media department, who worked diligently to forge contacts with the Ministry of Education, local school principals and teachers, community leaders and army commanders, among others.

“By the end of the tour, we actually had people trying to book extra halls for us in their communities”, said Doron. “It was an amazing reaction.”

The 130-member cast and crew included 90 actors, singers and dancers, most of whom knew little Hebrew when rehearsals started. Also involved were a logistics team to build and breakdown the massive set each time; a technical team for lighting, sound and video; a group manning the myriad of props; several make-up artists, and travel and hospitality coordinators.

During the March tour, a brand new Hebrew version of The Covenant was made available to Israelis in video and DVD formats, filmed at a recent live performance in Jerusalem. English versions of the new video and DVD also can now be ordered from Embassy Resources. The DVD has subtitles in several other languages as well.

Comments received from a 6th grade class in Ma’ale Adumim:

Aviv: “The message that impacted me most from the show was that the Jews must be strong, believe in God and He will deliver us.”

Or’el: “I enjoyed the show, because I saw Christians from different countries that love our country and it’s an experience for me to know that Christians do love you and are talking to you – thanks for the beautiful show.”

Ornan: “I was excited by watching how the people of Israel had to go all the way from slavery to freedom, and despite all the wars and troubles we are here in Canaan, like God had promised.”

Assaf: “I was excited to hear Christians telling us to believe in God! Christians are not different from us, we are all brothers and sisters.”

Je’ara: “It was like a time tunnel back into our history. The kids were cute and did a good job. The message I learned was, that we must not lose hope and God is always on your side and He remembers what He promised us. It’s nice to know that Christians learned to speak Hebrew only for us.”

Orli: “The main message for me was that we are one people and there is only one Promised Land for us and one God that we should serve and believe in. As much as we were scattered around the world, we became a stronger people and wanted to come back to Eretz Israel. It’s good to know that there are Christians that also love the Jews.”
Inside the Embassy

European Coalition for Israel launched in Brussels

AT A MAJOR CONFERENCE on anti-Semitism held in Brussels, Belgium in early March, European Christian leaders formally launched the “European Coalition for Israel”, a collective effort to advocate for closer EU-Israel relations.

The first official pro-Israel lobby at the European Parliament, the Coalition aims to build support for the State of Israel, to provide a balanced perspective on the complex Arab-Israeli conflict, and to stand against the rising tide of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in Europe.

“After centuries of persecution against the Jews of Europe, Europeans should know better. This is the simple motive behind this new initiative to mobilise support for Israel and what remains of European Jewry after the Holocaust”, said Dutch minister Rev. Willem Glashouwer, the initial chairman of the Coalition.

“At a time when Europe is increasingly turning aside from its Christian heritage and in the wake of a new wave of anti-Semitic violence in the region, Christian organisations have decided that it is time to better coordinate our efforts in Europe”, added Rev. Malcolm Hedding, ICEJ Executive Director.

The Coalition was formally launched on March 3 in Brussels, during a special EP conference on anti-Semitism organised with the European Jewish Congress. Besides several MEPs and Israeli dignitaries, more than 50 Christian leaders from across Europe participated in the founding ceremony.

Among the Israeli guests was MK Yuri Shtern, co-chairman of the new Knesset Christian Allies’ Caucus. Dr. Shtern expressed hope that this new Christian undertaking “will be a catalyst for changing the anti-Israel views held by many among Europe’s elite”.

The new alliance, consisting of several pro-Israel Christian ministries with pan-European and global constituencies, includes Bridges for Peace, Christians for Israel International, Christian Friends of Israel and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem.

After June elections determine the new make-up of the European Parliament, the Coalition will open a full-time office in Brussels.

Rev. Glashouwer, who heads the Holland-based group Christians for Israel International, concluded that, “there will be plenty of challenges ahead of us in Europe, but we are looking forward to facing them with Christian love and determination”.

Rev. Willem Glashouwer (at far left), initial Chairman of the European Coalition for Israel, sits on a head panel at the European Parliament’s recent conference on anti-Semitism.

Messiah Concert

IN LATE MARCH, THE CHRISTIAN Embassy participated once again in the annual Jerusalem Arts Festival, sponsoring a performance of Händel’s Messiah by the Stuttgart Christian Academy of Music and Arts from Germany. The YMCA auditorium on King David Street was packed with hundreds of Israeli admirers of this classical favourite. The concert ended with the crowd standing for a rousing rendition of the “Alleluia” chorus and Israel’s national anthem Hatikvah. The Stuttgart choir and orchestra, the only foreign entrants in this year’s arts festival, were blessed by the connection they made with Israelis during their visit.
Israel’s ‘New’ European Friends

The city of Prague has a storybook charm, the jewel of a Czech people that have endured centuries of overlords, only to emerge as a freedom-loving nation and symbol of the “new Europe”.

Ahead of a rally against anti-Semitism in Prague in mid-April, Dr. Mojmir Kallus, director of the ICEJ-Czech branch, explained why his country is uniquely positioned to help change Europe’s slanted policies on Israel as it enters the European Union this summer.

“The Czech Republic has often been an island of democracy amid a sea of totalitarianism”, said Kallus. “The Austrian Empire came and imposed Catholicism on the Protestant majority. Then the Nazis marched in after the West abandoned us to Hitler in 1938. We were betrayed again at Yalta to appease Stalin and two decades later when Soviet tanks crushed the ‘Prague Spring’ uprising.”

“We have come to appreciate freedom and to identify with Israel as a small democracy surrounded by dictators”, said Kallus. “We used to look to nations in Western Europe as models for our own aspirations, but now I think we have something to teach them.”

The ICEJ rally, held on national Holocaust Day in a picturesque garden inside the Czech parliament, conveyed an important opening message.

Attended by the Mayor of Prague, parliamentarians and over 1,000 leaders and members of the Christian, Jewish and secular communities, the event aimed to apply the lessons of the Holocaust to current problems, particularly global terrorism.

A Jewish survivor of the Terezin concentration camp lamented that youth today remember the fall of communism but know little about what happened under Nazism, when Czechoslovakia lost over 80% of its Jewish population.

Next, the son of a Czech couple declared “Righteous Gentiles” for saving 12 Jewish lives, recalled how his Christian parents risked everything by hiding them in a barn among the cows for months on end. “I inherited my parents’ love for the Bible and the Jewish people”, said Jan Ostrolucky. “My father knew that without them, we would not have salvation.”

In his remarks, the Israeli Ambassador to Prague, Arthur Avnon, noted that, “Israel is determined never to leave Jews unprotected again, but we cannot do it alone. We need friends like we have in the Czech government and the International Christian Embassy.”

Dr. Shimon Samuels, European director for the Simon Wiesenthal Center, then drew on the “universal lessons of the Holocaust” to challenge the Czech Republic and EU to outlaw suicide terrorism as a “crime against humanity”. Known for hunting down Nazi war criminals, the Wiesenthal Center’s challenge would mean those engaged in suicide terrorism could also be tried decades after their crimes.

Even before the rally, Kallus had secured the endorsement of a number of Czech politicians and church leaders on the Wiesenthal initiative, and the government is considering pushing it at the EU.

In addition, Kallus polled the three main Czech parties vying for seats at the European Parliament and found they all seek to reverse the EU’s traditional appeasement of the Arabs. The Czech Republic is one of 10 Central and East European nations that entered the EU on May 2, and Slovakia and Hungary also appear intent on promoting a more pro-Israel agenda.

This infusion of the “new Europe” comes at the same time as the establishment of the European Coalition for Israel, a pro-Israel lobby in Brussels founded by the ICEJ and other Christian ministries.

If the Prague rally is any indication, many members of Europe’s new guard are ready to work with Christians for fairer treatment of Israel.
The ICEJ held a special gathering in Vienna in April to inaugurate its new Austrian branch, just as the country resumes full relations with Israel.

New ICEJ-Austria national director Karl Klanner welcomed our International Director Michael Utterback and newly appointed Israeli Ambassador Avraham Toldeo for the occasion.

Klanner said the Austrian branch aims to continue improving ties between Austria and Israel after a period of strained relations over the rise of a far-right leader to power.

Noting that Austria was the land of both Herzl and Hitler, Klanner stated: “We acknowledge the guilt of the Austrian people for their historic anti-Semitism. We feel pain, horror and shame about what was done to the Jews during the Nazi era. Therefore we take responsibility for the past and will raise our voice against every form of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism.”

Amb. Toldeo commented on the threat of terror in Israel and the great hardship it causes to ordinary people. He too expressed concern over the spread of anti-Semitism worldwide.

Michael Utterback followed up by expressing Christian solidarity for the Jewish state and describing various aspects of the ICEJ’s global ministry for the 350 people in attendance.

For many years, the Christian Embassy’s German branch oversaw our work in Austria, so it was a pleasure to also have on hand former ICEJ-Germany national director Christian Stephan to bring a greeting.

Klanner summed up the atmosphere of the event as best described by Psalm 133:1: “Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

In northern Germany, events were held at the Christian Center Tostedt, a dynamic church near Hamburg that warmly welcomed our presence. The southern venue was in Stuttgart, home to the German branch offices. At each place, the program focused on both Israel and God’s work among the nations.

In his main addresses, ICEJ Executive Director Malcolm Hedding issued a challenge to be fully committed to God and his purposes for Israel and the Church in these trying days.

In separate sessions, ICEJ International Director Michael Utterback and his wife Gina described the Embassy's Aliyah efforts and how Christians can be practically involved in restoring Jews to the Land of Israel.

For many, the highlight of both conferences was the special youth events, featuring presentations by Liesl Hedding, coordinator of the ICEJ’s Grafted program for young adults, plus music and testimony by the German pop band Normal Generation?

Simon Weidelich, the band’s lead singer, called upon his peers to get involved in what God is doing in Israel through the work of the ICEJ and its Grafted ministry.

A special move of God was felt in the Stuttgart meeting, when nearly all of the young people rose to dedicate their life afresh to Jesus after a challenging message from Malcolm. German branch director Jürgen Bühler said, “this was a very encouraging first step in our efforts to include the young generation in Germany in our work for Israel.”
ICEJ-Holland Hosted Finnish Minister Juha Ketola for a successful speaking tour in February, reports our Dutch national director Jacob Keegstra. The packed schedule included six preaching venues and a radio interview. Ketola has become a popular speaker at Embassy events in many nations, especially among the youth, and the meetings featured a special emphasis on the ICEJ’s Grafted program for young adults.

With the tour coming the same week as the high-profile hearings on Israel’s security fence at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Keegstra says he noticed a real openness in each audience to the Embassy’s biblical message concerning Israel and God’s promises to the Jewish people. Every meeting ended with a time of powerful, targeted prayer, encouraging people to pray and proclaim the Scriptures regarding Israel and Jerusalem.

India Blesses Jerusalem

AMID A “SUBCONTINENT” OF 1.1 BILLION people, 330 million gods and 1,600 languages, a devout group of Christians in India are hungering for more knowledge about God and His promises to Israel.

ICEJ International Director Michael Utterback visited India during February to speak at eight different meetings in Mumbai (Bombay) and Vishakhapatnam. Invited by John Ishmael, the ICEJ’s national director there, it marked the first visit to India by an Embassy leader in over a decade.

Michael was deeply moved by the warm welcome awaiting him at every turn.

A line of children greeted him at one meeting, throwing rose petals as he walked down the aisle. Throgs tried to touch him as he left. Once in a car, the driver asked Michael to roll down his window and touch people as they drove away while a man in the car asked for the flower garlands he had received.

“I’m going to give these away to people. They want the petals, because it touched a man of God from Jerusalem”, Michael was told.

“IT wasn’t about me”, recalled Michael. “They wanted to be in touch with the city of Jerusalem. I asked the pastors afterwards if the people always respond like that. They said no. They love Jerusalem and they wanted to be touched by someone from this place.”

This love for Zion ignited in India a decade ago, when an ICEJ representative spoke at a church in a thatched hut. Rev. George Raju, now in his 70s and still active, began to spread the message and teamed up with John Ishmael’s father. Now John has picked up where his father left off.

Michael found an extremely receptive people who have been faithfully interceding for Israel. About 1,200 packed in to hear him at one meeting, while loudspeakers broadcast the message to the whole neighbourhood.

An Indian flag and handmade Israeli flag stood side-by-side. The people waved flags and sang Israeli songs. And when Michael walked in, they honoured him.

“The humility in that place was unbelievable,” he said. “God is going to the humble people - the ones that are insignificant in Western eyes.”

Michael encourages people to pray for John Ishmael - since there is a groundswell of support for Israel but also opposition and persecution.
For many Jews in the St. Petersburg area of western Russia, it has to be the most welcome telemarketing call one could ever receive.

"Would you like to come home to Israel", inquires a voice on the other end.

Thanks to a novel "fishing tool" developed by the Russian branch of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, the Jewish Agency for Israel now has a new way to identify Russian Jewish families and educate them on the possibility of making aliya.

"We recently compiled a special phone book that lists over 30,000 Jewish families in the St. Petersburg area and gave it to the local Jewish Agency office", ICEJ-Russia national director Howard Flower reports.

"They were very happy to receive it and went to work right away to get their staffers busy calling potential olim."

Howard says his office has compiled a 'Jewish Telephone Book' for St. Petersburg using software that extracted names from various electronic databases he has located. The unique phone book comes in a 500-page print version or on CD-Rom, and includes mobile and desk phones as well as mailing addresses.

"We are working now on the Moscow area", Howard adds.

He noted that at first some people denied their "Jewishness", but after the Jewish Agency trained its callers on how to speak effectively and developed a form questionnaire, responses have been more positive.

So far, 3,200 families from St. Petersburg have asked to be added to the Agency's mailing list for information and events, representing as many as 10,000 potential immigrants to Israel.

"This is the latest 'electronic' facet of our nationwide fishing project 'Let My People Know!'" Howard says.

There are countless thousands of Jewish communities that were scattered decades ago across vast Russia by the Stalin regime, and many are still unaware the passage is open to the Promised Land. The Christian Embassy has been using innovative ways to reach them with the good news that the door is open and the time to go is now. The "Let My People Know!" program also uses newspaper ads and other means of mass communication to reach the more than one million Jews remaining in Russia.

ICEJ-Russia is preparing for yet another challenge as well. The Putin government is working with the World Bank to try to depopulate the frozen Arctic regions of Siberia, and many isolated Jewish communities are among those being enticed to move south. A new ICEJ program will present Israel as a better alternative.

Under Stalin, tens of thousands of Jews were forcibly moved to the remote but mineral-rich northern regions, to work in the mines and factories of the Gulag. Later, the communists offered ordinary citizens higher wages and other financial incentives to relocate there and keep these industries alive during the Cold War. But now that capitalism is taking root, these bitterly cold areas are no longer subsidised by the central government and poverty is rampant among the 10 million local residents.

Russia hopes to convince at least 600,000 of them to move to warmer cities in what is referred to locally as the "mainland". The ICEJ will be letting Jewish families know they can go instead to their ancient "homeland" - Israel.

Top Left: A Russian Jewish woman is informed about Israel by an ICEJ-Russia staff member at a recent Aliyah Fair. Below: A 'Fishing Ad' placed by the ICEJ in a Russian newspaper.
But it was a prayer totally unlike any she had prayed before. “It was a prayer from my heart”, she insisted, “not from the prayer book”. And it still surprises her. “It was like something caused me to do it. I don’t know why.”

Eight people died and scores were injured on February 22 when a 23-year-old Palestinian bomber from Bethlehem boarded the crowded number 14 bus shortly after 8:30 a.m., detonating his explosive belt within sight of the Old City walls.

“It seems to me I even saw that person”, Alla said. “It was like there was something mocking in his eyes, laughing at us.”

Suddenly I heard this noise”, she continued. “The bus was full but nobody was talking... My hands were over my head.”

Alla had been sitting behind the bus driver, facing in the direction of the blast. “Things were flying - different sounds, whistling over me”, she recalled. “Something was falling on my head and everything around me was shaking.”

In the seat opposite, Alla saw people sitting quiet and peacefully. “They were dead people”, she realised later. “I thought to myself: ‘Why don’t they just run away?’”

Eighteen months ago, when Alla and her husband arrived in Jerusalem from their native Ukraine, they knew they were coming during a dangerous time. Many Jews do not want to make aliyah, Alla insisted. Even her daughters keep telling her to come home.

But even now, Alla is undeterred. “I have a different mission”, she says boldly. “I am a Jew.”

Though her Jewish father was one of 14 children, the family was all but wiped out during World War II. And because her father’s name had been erased from her birth certificate, Alla did not realise who she really was.

“I don’t have any more relatives”, she thought when she learned the truth, “so my mission now is to go to Israel”.

The Lasarenkos were assisted in their move to Israel by the ICEJ’s Jerusalem Support Center, which welcomed the couple to its Beit Hatikvah home for new immigrants. JSC has continued to support them financially ever since.

Before bed on the night of February 22, Alla opened up her prayer book as usual, still shocked at the power of that morning’s heartfelt prayer.

“Trust God”, she tells people still. “Believe in God, because He saved my life.”

The JSC assists needy Jewish immigrants to Israel in practical ways. The Center is operated by the ICEJ in partnership with Ministry to Israel, a department of the Church of God of Cleveland, Tennessee.
BY LATE MARCH, PREPARATIONS FOR Passover were in full swing all over Israel. Homes and businesses were being thoroughly scrubbed and cleaned. The old “leaven” was removed and replaced by specialty foods made kosher just for Pessach. The traditional Seder meal with friends and family was nearing, with its special telling of the Exodus story. Distinctive table settings were brought out, menus planned and shopping lists made.

At the same time, another kind of preparation was taking place. It also happens each spring, but this year it carried a hint of desperation. In social welfare offices and community centers across Israel, other lists were being drawn up with the names of underprivileged families approaching this festival with a sense of dread. Social workers agonised over the choices they had to make between this-or-that needy family.

One Israeli newspaper described the situation as quite troubling this Pessach, with over one million Israelis belonging to families unable to afford the symbolic elements of a customary Seder. Many are newly poor and ashamed to even open the door when a basket of food is delivered to their doorstep.

To meet the growing need, even the Knesset – through the new Christian Allies’ Caucus – sent out an urgent appeal to Christians abroad for help.

DECISIONS MADE
In the ICEJ’s Social Assistance department, we too spent time making hard decisions about which urgent requests flooding our office to address.

One social worker told us: “Of the 1000 families in our care, we have narrowed the list of those most in need down to 150. Of these, we were only able to scrape together enough budget, almost exclusively from donations, to assist 100. It was a nightmare trying to decide which to give to.”

SAP’s donation allowed them to assist 65 of these families. “Without your donation we don’t know what we would have done”, they assured.
ASSISTANCE DELIVERED
Thanks to the generous response to our urgent appeal for Passover donations, the ICEJ was able to assist over 2,200 Israeli families this year, either through the Knesset-sponsored distribution project or SAP’s own contacts throughout the land.

With each gift of food or food coupons, we specially prepared Passover greeting cards on behalf of Christians worldwide. These were delivered to local social welfare offices across the land and distributed to individual families.

When we brought donations and cards to one retired social worker in Ashkelon who now volunteers her time, she exclaimed how excited she was to be able to help the elderly and handicapped in her area. She confirmed what others had told us, that many anticipated donations received in prior years had not come this year, making our support an extra blessing. To express her appreciation, our staff member was not allowed to leave without a firm kiss on the cheek!

With one special donation, we filled a car to overflowing with food and travelled to Ashdod, to deliver it to orphans and widows chosen by a local social worker because of their severe needs. Visits to each home touched us immensely, but one stop was particularly moving. Upon opening the door, the mother burst into tears at the precious basket of food on the doorstep. She ushered us into a dark, drab apartment, bare except for some broken furniture. The oldest child, only seven, translated the conversation into Hebrew for his Russian-speaking mother. Alone in a new country with two young children following her husband’s death, tears flowed again when she read the greeting card and listened to us share about the love of Christians for the Jewish people.

“I had to change many things in my life”, she said when receiving a Passover gift. “There was a time I went to movies, plays and beaches. I just hope that the situation will be better not just here, but in the whole world.”

FOOD PACKAGED
On a visit to an organisation serving the poor primarily among the ultra-Orthodox community, volunteers were busy filling bags with food staples, Passover wine and, of course, a box of matza, the unleavened bread. One hundred bags were filled because of your giving. This scene was typical of others taking place in many parts of Israel, as volunteers reached out to make sure no one was left out this Pessach.

The director of an aid organisation told us that many recipients this year once earned salaries but now depend on welfare. “There are some people we do not ask to come to our Center and collect their food because we want to respect their dignity. Instead we will privately deliver the food to them.”

PROVISION
Because you gave, hundreds of other needy families received packages of food or food coupons. This year, many that once enjoyed a better standard of living joined the ranks of the impoverished. At age 69, Shira lives alone in Jerusalem, surviving on less than $400 a month in welfare payments. With that money, she pays bills and buys the groceries and medicine she needs. Anything above her core monthly expenses is beyond reach.

“...not just here, but in the whole world.”

The director of an aid organisation told us that many recipients this year once earned salaries but now depend on welfare. “There are some people we do not ask to come to our Center and collect their food because we want to respect their dignity. Instead we will privately deliver the food to them.”

• The elderly were not forgotten. SAP delivered food packages to over 200 elderly people, many bedridden. Among them were 120 new Russian immigrants who are sick and alone. Caring volunteers visit them regularly and we provided food packages for them as well.

• Lone soldiers received Passover gifts. Over fifty Israeli soldiers without family support in Israel were blessed by your giving. It was facilitated through an army base that we regularly visit on Parents’ Days. In addition, there were empty places this year at the tables of eight families whose sons-in-unii-
form from this base had given their lives in defence of Israel. We sent Passover baskets and personal greetings to each of these families, to let them know you care.

- Victims of terror face each holiday without a loved one, or under changed circumstances because of injuries and trauma. Along with a Passover gift, we were able to tell one hundred such families that Christians are mindful of them. A letter came back from one family reading: “It’s my desire to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the gift I received from the ICEJ. For someone who was wounded as well as losing a father in a terrorist attack, this was something wonderful. It gives me the feeling that I am not alone.”

- New immigrants enjoyed a special Seder meal. We funded special community Seders for Ethiopian and Russian immigrants, many of whom were experiencing their very first Passover meal. In Jerusalem, SAP staff celebrated a traditional Passover feast with 150 Ethiopian immigrants in their colourful robes, as a rabbi taught them the order and customs of the meal. The event organisers were grateful for the generosity of Christians, as they face very limited budgets for Passach assistance. One shared: “Without your help, these families would not have had this chance to learn how to celebrate their heritage.”

- The mentally ill celebrated as well. SAP also contributed towards a Seder for about 50 patients of the Organisation for the Mentally Ill, which helps provide care for their many needs. The SAP staff enjoyed laughter and the family atmosphere as different ones spontaneously participated in the Haggadah readings and songs.

And through the special Knesset distribution project, another 1,200 Israeli families received Passover baskets from the Embassy. Each basket included a letter saying it was provided by Christians who “consider it a privilege to stand with the nation of Israel and the Jewish people”.

Altogether, it amounted to over 10,000 Israelis assisted this Passover through the Christian Embassy. THANK YOU AGAIN FOR GIVING!!
After months of negotiations, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon extracted significant assurances from US President George W. Bush that he hoped would make a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza more palatable to Israelis. The disengagement pact in hand, Sharon nonetheless lost a tense Likud referendum battle and now faces a political crisis, not to mention a coiled Hamas consumed with revenge.

**SELLING POINTS**

**AHEAD OF HIS MID-APRIL VISIT to the White House, Sharon laid out the case for his proposed evacuation from Gaza and several isolated settlements in northern Samaria. The move was meant to reduce daily frictions with the Palestinians and to re-deploy for the foreseeable future behind a new line of defence until a reliable Palestinian peace partner emerges.**

Sharon contended his plan would help Israel solidify its hold on key blocs of Jewish communities in Judea/Samaria, while shielding the country from unwelcome peace initiatives imposed by outside powers. Sharon added that his strategy would also boost the nation’s sagging economy, attract a “wave of investment”, and “allow us a free hand to act against terror”.

Saying he was out to find a comfortable “parking spot” for the nation, meaning a period of reduced terrorism and some return to normalcy, Sharon promised to submit the plan to a Likud party referendum and then cabinet and Knesset votes. But first he had to sell it to a Bush Administration sceptical about any retreats in the war on terror.

**AMERICAN SWEETENERS**

**IT TURNS OUT SHARON’S TEAM did their homework, as Bush assured that, in return for the disengagement plan, the US would work for a final status agreement on terms ostensibly more favourable to Israel.**

First, Bush agreed that the roadmap to a two-state solution is the only path, meaning the Palestinians would be locked into a plan that requires democratic reforms and an end to terror before any further progress.

Second, Israel would not be expected to uproot all settlements and fully return to the 1949 armistice lines, an implied US acceptance of Israel’s eventual retention of key settlement blocs in Judea/Samaria.

Finally, the US endorsed the return of Palestinian refugees to a future Palestinian state, rather than to Israel, thereby undercutting their dreams of demographically destroying the Jewish state.

The historic written assurances on settlements and refugees marked a substantial shift in US policy, as Bush publicly recognised “realities” on the ground and continued to give shape to a de facto solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Surprised and outraged, the Palestinian leadership denounced the Administration’s trampling on “sacred” Palestinian rights and declared the peace process “dead”. Arab and European leaders likewise accused Washington of taking sides.
and prejudicing the outcome of final status talks.

In response, US Secretary of State Colin Powell began playing down the president’s guarantees, saying the Palestinians still must agree to the terms of any end deal. The “watering down” of Bush’s commitments came just as Sharon convinced top Likud cabinet ministers to back his plan. Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu consented only after obtaining a pledge that the security fence in Judea/Samaria would be completed before any Gaza pullouts begin, meaning 2005 at earliest.

BALLOTS AND BOMBS

Sharon’s initiative still faced major hurdles, the most immediate being the Likud referendum and Hamas vows to “open the gates of hell” in revenge for the killing of their top two leaders, Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantisi.

Ahead of the disengagement vote on May 2, polls showed the race tightening as the settler movement waged an effective grassroots campaign among some 200,000 registered Likud members and the American commitments lost their ironclad veneer. Besides the huge security risks (Katyushas on Ashdod; less intelligence; more arms smuggling), many Likudniks seemed averse to cleansing Jews from Gaza only to see rampaging Muslims desecrate the synagogues of Gush Katif.

Yet Sharon remained confident that party faithful would trust him to protect the nation’s future and not snub the insurance policy offered by Israel’s good friend in the White House. That confidence was to prove flawed, however, as Likud voters have just soundly rejected the plan and forced Sharon into a major re-think of his strategy.

The early May showdown also coincided with the end of a traditional 40-day Islamic mourning period for Yassin, killed in a precision rocket attack on March 22.

The targeting of Yassin, and his successor Rantisi soon after, were meant in part to keep Hamas from boasting that its terror campaign chased Israel from Gaza. The hits dealt serious blows to the Islamic terror militia, which feels pressured to score large-scale revenge attacks. Some initial attempts were thwarted by Israeli security, but a significant response may come once the mourning period expires, perhaps even against Jewish targets abroad.

With such uncertainties looming, Sharon will need patience and all the right breaks to steer Israel into that comfy parking place he has spotted ahead. And even if he gets there, it is doubtful if Palestinian terrorists or the international community are going to pay much attention to the time on the meter.

DAWN TO DUSK:
The Hunt for Hamas Leaders

When Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin offered up his daily morning prayers at a neighbourhood mosque near Gaza City on March 22, eyes indeed were looking down from the heavens. Fifteen sets of eyes to be exact, the number of surveillance platforms Israel had been using to track his every move. As bodyguards wheeled him home through a deserted street at daybreak, an IAF chopper seized the window of opportunity. With the flash of a rocket, the aura of invincibility that had built up around the frail but defiant “preacher of death” was swept away.

Hamas quickly installed its long-time spokesman, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, as Yassin’s replacement, tapping a figure so hard-line he believed comparing Zionists to Nazis was an insult to the Third Reich. Knowing he too was a marked man, Rantisi took rigorous precautions, surrounding himself with children while disguised in traditional Arab cloaks and headresses. But Israeli security managed to shadow one of his close bodyguards using a Palestinian informer, and were led straight to their prey. Again, airborne rockets found their target as Rantisi switched cars near his home just after sunset on April 17.

The Hamas movement will sorely miss Yassin and Rantisi, but they leave behind legions of poisoned young minds that will plague Israel into the next generation.
The media circus surrounding the release of nuclear spy Mordechai Vanunu served up many peculiar details about his life, but the one that stood out the most to me is that a grown man should need “adoptive parents”. It appears some dear old couple from Minnesota read about this lonely, mistreated figure in a “progressive” journal and decided he was in dire need of parental care.

A few weeks earlier, a far more worthy candidate for adoption was caught in the media spotlight at an IDF checkpoint near Nablus. A smallish 16-year-old Palestinian boy named Husam Abdu, mocked and tormented by his schoolmates for being “slow”, stood frozen with fear. Aided by a robot, Israeli soldiers gingerly helped him remove a suicide bomb vest that he had been coaxed into wearing for the paltry sum of 100 shekels and the promise of heavenly virgins.

“My friends at school make fun of me”, he said later. “They call me ‘Brains’ but they also make fun of me because I’m small and ugly. They call me ‘The Ugly Dwarf’. It hurt so much I wanted to kill myself.”

“Since I am studying the Koran, I know about the good life which awaits [in paradise]. The people who gave me the suicide belt told me this was my only chance to have sex.”

Back home, Husam’s mother was upset that her son had been recruited for a suicide mission, but added that she would not have objected had he been over 18.

Only days earlier, an even younger Palestinian boy – 10 year old Abdullah Quran – was caught trying to courier a bomb inside a schoolbag through the same checkpoint. Seeing that he was detained, his handlers nearly turned him into an unwitting suicide bomber by cell-phone, but the device failed to detonate.

Israeli authorities quickly sent him home, where he was lionised by classmates even while denying the entire incident to the press.

IN NORMAL SOCIETIES, these two young boys would have been whisked away to foster homes in no time flat. No one would have allowed either child to return to that culture of death – an environment where kids are brainwashed into thinking the highest aspiration in life is to “knock on the gates of paradise with the skulls of Zionists”.

Yet when two of the greatest peddlers of this mind poisoning - Hamas leaders Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantisi - were meticulously removed from the scene, most of the world condemned it as unlawful and unjustified. For some reason, the crippled cleric and perverse pediatrician are deemed entitled to an immunity from harm that they cruelly denied to Israeli children and even their own Palestinian sons and daughters.

There is some solace in the hope that, one day all the rest of those Palestinians behind this monstrous machinery of child sacrifice will be brought before a Nuremberg-style tribunal and tried as the detestable war criminals that they are. In the meantime, it is hard to bear the skewed morality at work in our world today, especially among those who sympathise with Israel’s enemies.

This is a world where a traitor and spy is embraced as a hero and offered a luxury seaside flat. Where a cold-hearted cleric is deemed a harmless and untouchable holy man. Where the 13 most despicable murderers in Bethlehem are escorted off to subsidised lives of comfort in Europe.

Yet no one has enough compassion and decency to stretch out a hand to little Husam and offer to take him away from this dark world that sought to drive him into an early grave.
**PROUD SPY**

Imprisoned 18 years for selling secrets about Israel’s nuclear program to a British paper, Mordechai Vanunu was released in April to a waiting media frenzy. Embraced by foreign admirers who want Israel de-nuked, a defiant Vanunu said he was proud of his treason and charged he was treated cruelly in solitary confinement for converting to Christianity. For now, he cannot leave Israel or talk with reporters about the Dimona reactor where he once worked as a technician. Though hailed by anti-nuclear activists as a courageous ‘whistleblower’, Vanunu once protested against Israel’s bombing of Iraq’s nuclear plant at Osirak in 1981. His release and Libya’s renunciation of its nuclear weapons have increased calls for Israel to end its policy of nuclear ambiguity. Meanwhile, Iran continues to develop nuclear arms for the express purpose of attacking Israel, while reports indicate Egypt also secretly maintains a nuclear weapons program through years of collaboration with Tripoli.

**SYRIA SMOthers KURDS**

A recent Syrian crackdown on Kurdish freedom protesters left at least 35 Kurds dead and scores wounded, just as Washington appears ready to impose sanctions on Damascus for sponsoring terrorism. Syria used tanks and troops to quell riots by its independence-minded Kurdish minority, sparked when an ethnic brawl erupted at a soccer match. Footage of Syrian police firing on fleeing unarmed Kurds was aired in Israel and elsewhere. Besides mounting domestic unrest, the Assad regime faces increased American pressure to allow democratic reform and to cooperate in the war on terror, and economic sanctions are expected soon.

**ARAB ANGEL**

When Fatah gunmen ambushed a jogger in Jerusalem one recent Friday evening, the Al Aksa terror militia quickly boasted about killing a Jewish “settler” in the “settlement” of French Hill. They later apologised when their victim turned out to be a Christian Arab, George Khoury, age 21 and a born-again believer according to friends. Adding insult to injury, Palestinian Authority officials showed up at the funeral to honour him as a “shaheed”. “My son is an angel, not a martyr”, shot back his mother. The victim’s father, Elias Khoury, a prominent lawyer who has long advised and defended the PLO, called the Fatah militia “a group that undermines the issue of Palestinian justice, and harms the Palestinian interest and takes it back years”. Ironically, he also lost his father in the PLO refrigerator bombing in downtown Jerusalem in 1975.

**NEW NEIGHBOURS**

Eleven Jewish families recently moved into Silwan, in east Jerusalem’s Kidron Valley, sparking protests by some local Arabs. The village was once home to hundreds of destitute Yemenite Jews who had walked through the desert all the way from Yemen 120 years ago, only to be chased out during Arab riots in the 1930s. The new residents purchased homes at full price in the old Yemenite quarter and reports indicate good relations are now developing with their Arab neighbours.
15 February 2004: IDF to declare 3 soldiers missing since Lebanon war “killed in action”.

16/2: Israeli right, Arabs oppose Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s disengagement plan; Hamas vows to house suicide bombers’ families in evacuated Jewish homes.

17/2: Knesset approves resolution against Gaza evacuation.

18/2: US, EU to boycott Hague fence hearings.

19/2: Israeli security reports preventing 9 Palestinian attempts to down flights at Ben Gurion Airport.

22/2: Suicide blast on Jerusalem bus #14 kills 8.

23/2: Hague hearings on security fence open.

25/2: IDF raids Ramallah banks, confiscates millions in terror funds.

26/2: Three terrorists caught on suicide mission to Afula.

27/2: Palestinian gunmen murder Israeli couple in Judea.

28/2: IAF helicopter gunship kills 3 Islamic Jihad terrorists in Gaza City.

29/2: Three Palestinian teens caught slipping into Israel with homemade guns.

1 March: Palestinian Authority newspaper says Dome of the Rock damaged in Feb. earthquake.

2/3: Israel bows to US over security fence route; Advisor to PLO chief Yasser Arafat killed in internal Gaza power struggle.

3/3: Sharon accused of working to free Hizb‘Allah hostage Elhanan Tannenbaum due to family ties; IDF kills 3 Hamas members in pinpoint Gaza strike.

4/3: Shin Bet reports 56 terror warnings prior to Purim.

6/4: Failed multi-car bomb assault at Erez crossing leaves 6 Palestinian terrorists dead.

7/3: IDF kills 15 Palestinians in anti-terror raid; Sharon says Gaza settlements will be destroyed, not left for Palestinians.

8/3: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak rejects security role in Gaza.

9/3: Twin suicide bombers attack Istanbul restaurant, killing one.

11/3: Ten explosions tear through 4 trains in Madrid, killing nearly 200, wounding 1,500.

14/3: Two Palestinian suicide bombers kill 10 at Ashdod port, Hamas intended chemical “mega attack”.

15/3: Ten-year-old boy caught transporting bomb through IDF checkpoint.

17/3: US threatens Syria over support for terror; 5 Jerusalem terror attacks thwarted in past 2 weeks.

18/3: Jordan’s King Abdullah secretly meets Sharon at Negev ranch.

19/3: Arafat’s Al Aksa Brigades mistakenly kill Arab jogger in Jerusalem.

22/3: Israeli gun-ships kill Hamas founder and spiritual leader ‘sheikh’ Ahmed Yassin in Gaza.

23/3: Arab, world leaders denounce Yassin hit.

24/3: 16-year-old suicide bomber sent by Arafat’s Fatah faction caught at Nablus checkpoint.


27/3: Tunisia abruptly calls off Arab League summit.


30/3: British police arrest 8 terror suspects, seize half-ton of explosives near Heathrow Airport; Philippines pre-empt “Madrid-level attack” by capturing 80 pounds of TNT.

31/3: Jewish families move into east Jerusalem’s Silwan neighbourhood.

1 April: US diplomats meet PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei in Jericho.

2/4: Hundreds of Palestinians riot after Muslim prayers on Temple Mount.

3/4: Israeli father of six killed, daughter injured when Palestinian gunman infiltrates settlement.

4/4: IDF thwarts HIV-contaminated bombing during Passover.

12/4: IDF thwarts HIV-contaminated bombing during Passover.

13/4: Budapest police foil Holocaust Museum bomb plot by Palestinian-born imam; King Abdullah says foiled al-Qaida chemical attack could have killed 20,000 Jordanians.

14/4: Bush hosts Sharon at White House to reach disengagement pact; Palestinians, Arabs angered.
Nieces and nephews in tow, Ashira Hamman gazed at the replica of Masada at the Mini Israel theme park and studied the miniature figurines preparing for the Roman siege in 73 AD. Then she looked past the park’s boundaries, pointed to the undeveloped Israeli landscape and smiled.

“We are normally mini”, she commented on the size of her country. “So what would you expect at a mini-Israel park?”

Stretched before her, laid out in the shape of a Star of David, were the highlights of Aunt Ashira’s tiny homeland – but even tinier.

With 350 model buildings, 30,000 human figures, 20 planes, 20,000 miniature trees, 3,500 vehicles, 100 water vessels and eight trains, Mini Israel is actually quite extensive and extremely intricate. It is also considered the biggest ‘miniature’ park of 47 others in the world, according to Yonatan Sion, a Mini Israel marketing executive.

Set on 13 acres between Latrun and Modi’in, and halfway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the park opened a year and a half ago, but was 10 years in the making. About 150 million shekels in private funding went into the building of the park, Sion said.

“The idea developed 10 years ago”, Sion said. “A couple of entrepreneurs came up with the idea after they went to Holland.”

The models were carefully researched with plans, drawings, land and aerial photography. Sion said a group of artists who made aliyah from the former Soviet Union developed their own technology. The detail on the models, built at a scale of 4 cm. to 1 meter, is so involved that anyone can recognise the places they have seen throughout the land.

As one walks into the park there are a number of circular paths to follow. The park is divided into geographical sections, each in a different triangle of the Star of David.

And it isn’t just the sights that are familiar, but the sounds also. In the Haifa Bay area, the harbour resounds with boats. In Arab towns, the call to prayer resonates from the mosques. At Teddy Kollek Stadium in Jerusalem, the crowd cheers for the soccer players.

The largest crowd at the theme park gathers at the replica of the Kotel (Western Wall) where miniature worshippers hum their prayers and ‘davin’ in front of the structure, while on the other side of the Wall, Muslim worshippers kneel in unison at the Dome of the Rock compound.

On other spots, the skyscrapers of Tel Aviv tower over the coastal area. Planes taxi at Ben-Gurion Airport. Familiar churches stand on the Mount of Olives and around the Sea of Galilee.

As with the diversity within the land itself, visitors to the park also represent the nation’s diversity. Religious and secular Jews, both old and young, mingle on the paths. Many tourist groups also pass through, but the majority of the park’s nearly 700,000 visitors since its September 2002 opening have been Israelis.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has arranged a special evening at the theme park for pilgrims attending the 2004 Feast of Tabernacles celebration. The program will include a tour, local foods, music and folk dancing.

Ashira came from Jerusalem with her nieces and nephews to take in the theme park on a warm spring day.

“It’s important for the children to see and to feel”, she said. “You have it all here - the history, the culture, nature.”

For more information on Mini Israel, visit their Web site at: www.minisrael.co.il
Terror events around the world continue to reap a harvest of fear and uncertainty. World events seem out of control and the issues of security are becoming more relevant with each passing day. What will be our anchor and place in these times? The answer is the sovereignty of God!

The Word of God everywhere affirms God’s sovereignty. He rules alone over the world and all its affairs, and all of history is moving toward what the Bible often calls “that day”. In the book of Psalms, the nations rage but God laughs at them. In Isaiah, the nations are but a drop in the ocean and their idols are useless. In Daniel, the Lord God of Heaven raises up kings and leaders and puts them down again. And in Ezekiel, all nations and all peoples will yet acknowledge that the God of the Bible is the only true God.

“That day” will be a unique day in history that will bring forth judgement, righteousness, vindication of the purpose of God and His triumph over all that is evil. In the end, by His Messiah, He will reign over all the earth and remove war from it.

These are not idle promises or the longings, without substance, of Biblical authors. The certainty of God’s sovereignty is a well-established truth in Scripture and this certainty is backed up by the fact that every promise of God has been faithfully fulfilled and only those that await a future fulfilment remain to be realised. The restoration of Israel, that has taken place against the “tide of history” but against the backdrop of Scripture, is a remarkable verification of God’s word and promise. He is a faithful God and not one word of all that He has promised will fail. In “that day” we shall finally see in reality what we only read in the Bible today!

For this reason we need to anchor our lives to the Word of God. Jesus said that God’s Word is truth. As we build it into our lives on a daily basis and remain in fellowship with Him, we quickly learn that the peace of God guards our hearts and minds and that we have not been given a spirit of fear but of love, power and a sound mind.

Knowing God’s sovereignty and care frees us then to serve Him in a dark, violent and evil world. We therefore:

- Bless our Churches in the Nations;
- Bless Israel; and
- Bless Him.

All fear has been driven out of our lives by His great love. Let us then serve Him with joy.

Rev. Malcolm Hedding
Focus Points for the 2004 Grafted Tour:

- Watchman on the walls of Jerusalem.
- Learning to be a generation of forerunners for the Kingdom.
- Interceding on behalf of our generation “for such a time as this.”
- Discovering the Land of Israel and her people.

“For therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.” (Heb. 12:28,29)

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