RELIEF FROM THE WAR
BRINGING HOPE TO ISRAEL’S EMBATTLED NORTH
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 secure Web site at www.icej.org/donate.php to send your gift. All donations are tax deductible according to the law of your country.

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**The Great Hosanna!**

*Psalm 118:15*

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**FEATURING**

Malcolm Hedding
David Pawson
Lance Lambert
Leo Giovinetti
Robert Stearns

...come show Israel you care!
Dear Friends,

Words cannot fully express our sense of anguish and outrage as we have witnessed Israel again fighting for her very survival. Anguish because the people of Israel have endured so many brutal conflicts and wars in order to exist in the land that God bequeathed to them as an everlasting possession. As a nation they have endured far too much heartbreak and sorrow. As I interact and rub shoulders with them, their persistent heart cry is, “When will it all end?”

Outrage because the world, including the Western democracies, displays a hatred toward Israel that is alarming. Israel has not been at war with a weak and small militia based in Lebanon called Hizb’Allah but, on the contrary, with a well-armed terrorist army that has been armed and supplied by Iran via Syria! Where in the world would one find a party in the parliament of any nation that is a small minority faction yet effectively running the country by virtue of its weapons of mass destruction? In truth, this war has been and is a war against Islam and Iran is at the root of it. Indeed Israel is defending Western values and interests as it seeks to stop this aggression by Hizb’Allah. If the West crumbles now and does not stand up with Israel in this battle, the conflict will soon reach their distant shores with devastating consequences.

The struggle unfolding before our eyes has deep spiritual roots. That is, the “Party of Allah” (Hizb’Allah) is seeking nothing short of the full and total destruction of Israel in order to return the region to the “Waqf” of Islam. This is the ‘bottom line’ of this conflict. The same is true of Hamas in Gaza. The amazing thing is that the Western media will at no time own up to this reality. Even though Hizb’Allah by its very name designates itself as a religious entity dedicated to a religious struggle!

Thankfully we know that the God of the Bible will defend Israel and in the end totally deliver her. Through this conflict He will show Himself great and demonstrate that He is the only true God, the greatest, without an equal or a competitor.

We who love Israel must now, more than ever, pray for her. To this end, over the last two decades and more, God has raised up a prayer army from within the Evangelical Church in every corner of the world to stand with and pray for Israel. This should not be surprising because the Word of God states that, “when the enemy comes in like a flood, God will raise up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).

The ‘flood of the enemy’ is here but so is the heavenly standard. I therefore urge you to gather in groups or at your churches to pray for Israel. Moreover, I also urge you to ascend to Jerusalem to join us for the Feast of Tabernacles. Your visible presence in Zion will once again convince Israelis that their best friends are the Bible-believing Christians throughout the world.

Please make every effort to join us in Israel this October.

Yours in Jesus,

Malcolm Hedding

Executive Director of the ICEJ
ICF brings relief to the north

Christian Embassy funds emergency projects to help children, elderly, soldiers under fire

By Lena Kachinski

Flowers survive a direct Katyusha rocket hit on an apartment in Haifa in late July

Clutching on to a water pipe in his family’s bomb shelter and refusing to move, five year-old Yoni’s eyes widened in fear. His mother gently took his hands off of the pipe, and wrapped them around her shoulders as she carried him to what would be his first trip out of the shelter in days, and his first time away from home in weeks.

Like so many other children in northern Israel, Yoni has been living in fear of the all-too-familiar sound of explosions from Hizb’Allah rockets. In recent weeks, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has responded to the growing humanitarian needs of embattled communities in northern Israel by launching a number of aid projects aimed at bringing relief, particularly to children confined to bomb shelters.

In early August, our friendly mascot “AJ the Lion” greeted three bus loads of children arriving from the hard hit areas of Kiryat Shmona, Karmiel and Nahariya for a day excursion at the Shefayim water park sponsored by the ICEJ.

Early that morning the children made several attempts to board the buses, but were continually sent running back to the bomb shelters because of repeated warning sirens. An hour later, the children clapped and cheered when they realised they were all loaded and the bus was finally on its way south.

Yoni’s eyes lit up in excitement when he arrived at the park and saw AJ, and not wasting any time, ran towards the lion for a big hug.

“It’s the first my son has truly smiled in weeks,” said his mother Petra.

The children also received some of our 500 “activity kits” for children in bomb shelters assembled in cooperation with the King of Kings congregation in Jerusalem. AJ was on hand to greet the children and hand out gift packets.

Another youngster was so thrilled to be having fun outdoors in the water park that he called his parents to tell them how great it was. When the father found out who had sponsored the trip, he was quoted as saying, “For weeks we wanted the city, the government, Jewish organisations, anyone to just get us out of this hell, and who comes to help but the Christians! I can’t believe it.”

The ICEJ launched its relief initiatives within the first week of fighting, when our Social Assistance Program partnered with the Haifa social welfare department to relocate over 100 children and their parents from Haifa to a hostel in the Jerusalem Fo-
Other recent ICEJ Emergency Projects Include:

- Sponsoring over 1000 meals a day for children, elderly and IDF reservists distributed in partnership with local charities in Haifa, Kiryat Shmona and the Golan throughout the duration of the war.

- Sponsoring a week-long outing at the Dead Sea for 30 children from a church congregation in Haifa.

- Assisting a Christian Arab congregation in the Galilee to provide shelter for their children.

- Assisting congregations in Haifa and Nahariya that took in South Lebanese refugee families living in the Galilee who were forced to seek shelter.

- Distributing toys and games to hundreds of children in bomb shelters in Haifa and the Galilee.

- Assisting social workers in Netanya to provide meals, baby needs and pharmaceuticals for children who fled the targeted areas.

- Providing food and activities for numerous other families on a case-by-case basis.

- Funding a post war rehabilitation program in the Galilee for traumatised children who spent the summer in bomb shelters.

As the nation rebuilds, communities in the north still need your help. Fill out the enclosed donation form to help Israel in her time of need.
By the third week of the current war, the scenic port city of Haifa had been hit by over 300 rockets from Lebanon. But there was a brief lull in the fighting on the day we visited, and residents were coming out to shop - a brief taste of normalcy in this brutal struggle with Hizb'Allah.

But at Rambam Hospital, nothing was back to normal. The main hospital in northern Israel, it has been treating all the wounded soldiers and civilians it can handle.

“There’s a new clash now in the north. There may a helicopter coming”, shouted hospital spokesman David Ratner. “We already know about two dead soldiers, though we don’t know what happened exactly. But that’s something we should not talk about yet, because probably the parents don’t even know there was a clash.”

Over the noise in the bustling hospital lobby, Ratner speaks proudly of Rambam’s record in this conflict.

“Out of 390 people that were treated here so far, 18 were severely wounded and no one died in the operating room. That is quite unusual. We have a very good intensive care unit – the best in the world.”

The staff at Rambam is still buzzing about the miracle experienced by a soldier in a coma when IDF chief-of-staff Dan Halutz paid a recent visit.

“He came to visit a soldier that was hit very badly in his neck, and he simply opened his eyes at the very time the chief of staff came into his room. He was trying to salute... and it was a very touching moment”, recalled Ratner.

There were many more touching moments at Rambam when we visited in early August with some of the Christian Embassy staff and a solidarity mission of 30 American Christians led by Front Page Jerusalem radio founder Earl Cox.

“We met a young soldier who had a bilateral amputation - both legs beneath the knees”, remembers Kathy Rowlands of the ICEJ. “He was amazing, so full of life. He said he was grateful to God for the gift of life, that he had survived the attack. He was also thankful that he had not lost his hands because he’s a guitarist in a rock group... He was in bed and played his guitar for us. He just had a big beam on his face and he was genuinely happy to see us.”

“One of the things he had experienced that really thrilled him was that he had seen how the people appreciated what the IDF were doing for the country up in Lebanon”, continued Kathy. “He personally felt this appreciation from people for his sacrifice. He realised that what they were doing up there...”

Front Page Jerusalem founder Earl Cox at the bedside of a wounded IDF soldier in Haifa’s Rambam Hospital
was not taken for granted. It was very moving.”

“There was a woman, a Russian immigrant, who was seriously hurt in a Katyusha attack and as a result she has only one leg left”, recalled Jim Schutz of the Embassy staff. “When we visited her in hospital, she was in remarkably good spirits and was very happy to receive us. We were able to pray for her and her husband were both in tears when we left, extremely thankful that Christians had come to show support for them and for their country.”

We spoke with some other wounded soldiers who were remarkably upbeat as well, though very, very tired.

“I am in an anti-tank unit of the Golani Brigade... and I got shot by a missile”, said Gidon. “I hurt in my legs, [but] our morale is in the sky. We want to fight for the peace of the north, the citizens of the north and the citizens of Israel.”

“I am a sniper and we were building an outpost [in Lebanon], and I was shot from friendly fire”, said Yonathan. “[But our] morale is very good, very high. Yes, of course we feel we are fighting for the whole nation.”

Three floors underground, Leah had been overseeing 100 children in the hospital’s crowded bomb shelter for 16 days now.

“It’s a very difficult project”, she said above the roar of the youngsters. “There are a lot of times the children are bored and they have nothing to do, but everything is okay. There is a crisis, but the kids are doing well...Yes, they understand what is going on.”

When we visited city hall, Haifa Mayor Yonah Yahav explained exactly what’s been going on lately.

“It’s the first time after 58 years that we are under fire. It’s a very shocking situation and difficult time”, said Mayor Yahav. “We’ve had in the whole north 19 people who got killed and out of them 11 were here in this city. The reason for those numbers is the very fact that the rockets are containing ball bearings, small bullets that are being scattered around within a vicinity of 1000 meters. And whoever stands there doesn’t stand a chance... It’s the same system like a suicide bomber belt.”

Mayor Yahav has unique credentials when it comes to what has been happening in Lebanon.

“I am positioned politically on the very left and I’m backing all the actions taken by the government nowadays. I’ll tell you why, because ten years back I was a member of the Israeli parliament and I initiated the movement for a one-sided withdrawal from south Lebanon... We succeeded to pull the troops out of Lebanon in 2000, and we did it under one condition; that it would be tranquil and that the international community would recognise the border between us and Lebanon, which the international community did. So who has the right to shoot at us?”

Despite the current crisis, Mayor Yahav remains optimistic about his city.

“No suicide bomber and no rocket sent by Hizb’Allah can jeopardise the good relations between the Jews and Arabs of Haifa.” Mayor Yahav

“Haifa is the only place on earth which has been exercising full peace between Jews and Arabs throughout the last 100 years. No suicide bomber and no rocket sent by Hizb’Allah can jeopardise the good relations, the harmonious relations between the Jews and the Arabs”, he insisted. “Whenever peace comes to the Middle East, the model will be the model of Haifa. And we can do lots of things together with Beirut, and I’m not joking.”
Touring the war zone

Christians in the ghost towns of Galilee

By Lena Kachinski

The Galilee resort town of Tiberias has resembled a ghost town of late, as hundreds of rockets have slammed into the city from Lebanon. Nonetheless, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem paid a recent solidarity visit, accompanied by 30 Christians from across the USA on a support mission to show Israel that they are not alone.

Every street, restaurant, and shop was more deserted than it would be on a normal Shabbat afternoon. Many businesses did not even bother displaying signs indicating they were closed.

We arrived as a small caravan of families raced south out of town in the direction of Jerusalem, loaded with all the clothes, food, and supplies they could carry.

Our delegation, about a dozen Embassy staff and the American group led by Earl Cox of the “Israel Always” organisation, were met by a warm welcoming party when the Galilee Experience gift shop and a local restaurant unlocked their doors after 20 days of no business.

The city’s minister for external relations, Yael Eran Pinian, greeted our group and explained how the town was working night and day to withstand the destruction and panic caused by the rockets. The sirens that precede a barrage of missiles are the signal for the townspeople to scurry into the bomb shelters; and for the police and municipality workers to rush out to the latest blast sites.

“We are working around the clock to provide thousands of food packages for low-income families and elderly who need our help”, she says. “The entire economic system has shut down.”

Pinian says that the joint task force recently found an elderly man in his home, too scared to move and without family to assist him.

“He was frozen in his chair, staring forward and trembling”, she recalls. “This is what we are facing every day. This is what we are fighting for – the safety of those unable to fight for themselves.”

Pinian, new to her job, says she had never experienced such a show of love from Christians before as she presented the ICEJ with a flag of the Tiberias town crest as a show of appreciation.

In the afternoon, the plan was to head north up the Hula Valley towards the border in order to encourage soldiers mobilising to enter Lebanon. But the rocket barrages were heavy in the area and the Israeli bus driver and guide were reluctant to take the group any further.

After a little persuasion we made it to Rosh Pina, near Safed, where IDF Spokesman Col. Olivier Rafowicz was waiting to give us a briefing on the IDF’s progress in the fighting nearby.

He expressed his appreciation for the group travelling so deep into northern Israel and commented, “Israel cannot lose a war...
or we are destroyed. We need peace for making freedom. We need Christians to be Israeli ambassadors abroad.”

Rafowicz also expressed the frustration the IDF feels when civilians on both sides of the border are traumatised by the battle against the terrorist group Hizb’Allah.

“You will not meet one Israeli who is happy we are at war”, he said. “We are not happy to see innocents on either side of the border die. But the point is that Hizb’Allah needs to be stopped, or the dying will never stop.”

A local restaurant owner in Rosh Pina, who hosted the military briefing, said that with every passing day of this conflict, it gets harder.

“Hizb’Allah was sending over rockets even before the war, and that was unbearable. We couldn’t take it anymore”, she said. “Then when they took the two soldiers, they pierced our hearts. They knew we would respond. We want to do something once and for all. The terrorists need to be stopped.”

During our time spent at the restaurant, the woman received a phone call from her son that she had been dreading for days.

“Mom, I’m turning my phone off now”, he said. “I’m going in... I’m going in to Lebanon.”

Comforted by the fact that her restaurant was filled with Christians, she was able to wipe away her tears and smile.

“It is a very good feeling to know we are not alone. We know God is looking after us.”

While most of the group then headed back for Jerusalem, Cox led a dozen brave souls on an overnight mission to the Metulla area overlooking southern Lebanon. Spending the night as guests at Kfar Blum, a kibbutz just a few miles from heavily bombarded Kiryat Shmona, the smaller delegation visited IDF soldiers the next morning who were manning tanks and artillery guns near the front lines, bringing prayers for safety and a welcome message of friendship and commitment.

Back in Jerusalem, the group responded to a blood shortage alert from Magen David Adom – Israel’s version of the Red Cross – by lining up outside the MDA station downtown and giving the gift of life to support Israel once more.
Of 5,000 Lone Soldiers currently serving in Israel’s armed forces, ninety-nine percent have been in the country for less than three years. They come because they are Zionists, willing to fight to defend the Jewish homeland. Many serve in elite commando units and face death far removed from the comfort of family or home.

Warm and outgoing, Gina Utterback makes friends wherever she goes. So it was no surprise when Tziki Aud, head of the Jewish Agency office two floors down, knocked on the door of the Jerusalem Support Center to ask for assistance. “Would you help us with some of our kids?” he asked JSC Director Gina.

But the ‘kids’ in question were not the average new immigrants touched by the JSC - the ICEJ’s aliyah and absorption arm. They were lone soldiers, serving in the Israeli Defence Forces, far from home with little support, or income.

Armed with excitement and some reservations, Gina said yes. One spontaneous need led to another. More and more started coming. Her office was soon filled with soldiers. With no ‘home’ to go back to on leave, many needed help paying rent. Others had more practical needs: a closet or a desk - things anyone else would just call up their dad to get.

In no time at all, the JSC sought to fill in the family gap, connecting individuals with sponsor families abroad: Christians showing practical love to Israelis on the front line.

Gina, and her husband Michael, who serves as the Executive Director of Ministry to Israel, also pitched in, making care packs for the new soldiers in boot camp. Marmite and Tetley Tea for the Brits. Dr. Pepper and Oreos for the Americans. For those going on missions: vacuum-packed beef jerky and Old Spice deodorant.

“We started to follow them from their first day arriving at Ammunition Hill all the way to their discharge three years later -just like any parent would do,” Michael Utterback said.

But it was one of a long list of things their own moms and dads could not do: Chocolate Cocoa Pops from the grocery store, cans of Mountain Dew in the fridge, an ‘open home’ to come back to, to unwind, talk and “hang out.”

In mid July, Hizb’Allah raided Israel’s northern border, surprised an IDF patrol, kidnapped two Israeli guards and killed the others. Within hours war had begun. And many JSC-sponsored soldiers were on a bus headed to Lebanon.

This time, Gina and her family were far away, visiting a Church convention in the US. “I immediately called Tziki to find out about the soldiers,” Gina recalls. “He told me these were in Lebanon and these were in Gaza, but so far all were safe.”

The Utterbacks were concerned, but knew God brought these young people to Israel for such a time as this. And in the heat of battle the kids understood this too, Gina says. “They knew why they were there.”

As soon as the Utterbacks returned, the JSC found itself tied into the destiny of these young people in more and more meaningful ways. Once again, Gina and Michael and their staff started doing what only family could do. They took soldiers to the funerals of their closest friends, visited the injured in hospitals, helped pay the rent of one young man unable to do so when his room-mate was killed, and helped others unburden the distress of what they had seen and heard.

Since then, Gina has seen many lone soldiers straight from southern Lebanon. Some she didn’t even recognise because they lost so much weight. “They arrived back tired, dirty and quiet,” she says. “These young 18, 19 and 20-year old boys have been through a lot these past few weeks.”

“What do young people away from home need?” says Michael Utterback. “Mother and father figures, good food, and safety. And we’re able to provide that. Not much glory in it for us -but a whole lot of satisfaction!”

But for young Israeli soldiers back from the front, it has made all the difference. To have someone to call on in a time of need. And to know that they speak for millions of Christians around the world who care enough to give.

This, after all, is what comforting Israel is all about.
How did you follow the war?

If you care about Israel...
there is a better choice

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Berlin, July 12. The packed tour bus pulled up outside a cathedral-like church in the city center midway through the afternoon. Greeted by a large poster advertising that night’s performance, the 31 members of The Covenant’s travelling cast and crew began stretching their legs.

It had been a marathon 14-hour journey from Paris overnight but the taxing sprint-finish lay ahead: lights, stage and costumes still needed to be loaded-in and set in place before this 900-seat makeshift theatre could open its doors at 7 p.m. Yet another swift breakdown, brief night’s rest, and a 4-hour morning road trip to Hannover would follow the 90-minute performance. Just two of 21 cities in this back-breaking seven-nation, six-week European tour: A tour that tonight, after multiple performances across Spain, Ireland, Britain and France was still only halfway through.

Yet, descending from the bus onto the streets of the German capital, few in this varied company of singers, dancers, technicians, and translators were fully focused on the performance at hand.

News had filtered through on the bus that earlier the same morning Iranian-backed Hizb’Allah forces had infiltrated Israel’s northern border from Lebanon, killed three soldiers and kidnapped two more before unleashing a barrage of deadly Katyusha rockets at communities in the north.

Europe: Through the pages of faith

The Covenant inspires thousands to ‘turn up and stand up’ for Israel

By Michael Hines
In the hours that followed, five more IDF troops were killed as they went in after their captured comrades. By early afternoon, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had called the morning raid “an act of war”.

“My first thought was: Oh no! We’re not home”, recounted The Covenant’s producer Chuck King - displaying the typically Israeli instinct of not wanting to abandon the country under fire.

It even crossed his mind to change his flight tickets and take his wife Louann and 11-year old daughter Jessica straight back to Israel to join the rest of their family in Jerusalem, where he has served as the ICEJ Music Director for over 10 years.

“When the conflict broke out, the fatigue and exhaustion was marginalised for me”, Chuck reflected later. It was as though the outbreak of war put the whole purpose of their gruelling European mission into perspective. “We realised again why we were doing this”, he confessed.

In this, he was not alone. The whole group became conscious of the heightened significance of their role as travelling ambassadors for the Jewish State, not least the four families who travelled the 13,000 kilometres by road (not to mention thousands more by boat and air) with eight children aged 6 months to 12 years.

“The anti-Semitic feeling in Europe is real and in your face”, Chuck asserted. “So for us to be going around as actors and singers waving the Israeli flag was significant. Jewish people in every city heard our voices of solidarity and were surrounded in the audience by thousands of Christians, saying: ‘Israel we are standing with you, you are not alone, we are praying for you!’”

For those on stage it was an unforgettable experience, as night after night hundreds went away choking back their tears, speechless and visibly shaken.

“It’s very moving for us to see the [audience’s] tears, the response, especially during the tough scenes”, Chuck explained, referring to the musical’s dramatic presentation of the persecution of the Jews throughout history, culminating in the Holocaust. “To know, in this unique way, we’re bringing healing and closure to people who’ve been hurt by Christians, especially in Germany.”
Others in the cast were quick to agree. “I believe that the impact will have long term effects in the hearts and minds of people”, said choreographer Chloe Osborne, one of the half-dozen leading soloists who carry the weight of the musical on stage. “We came to Europe at just the right time.”

It’s a moment that The Covenant’s director and co-writer Elizabeth Muren, has been waiting for since childhood. “When I was a little girl, my papa told me the story of the Holocaust”, Elizabeth would tell audiences every night from Madrid to Vienna. “I felt I was born too late; I should have been there to help; to do something for the Jewish people. But my father told me not to worry; I would have plenty of opportunities in my life to do that. Today is that day – this is your chance and my chance to stand up for the Jewish people.”

As she searched out last-minute production supplies, Elizabeth encountered blatant hostility from local shopkeepers when they discovered the nature and purpose of the show.

“She said she felt like she’d stepped into the pages of a journal from the 1930s”, Chloe recalled on her return to Jerusalem in August. “We were all left with the gut instinct that history is repeating itself in people’s mentality in Europe right now.”

As the war in southern Lebanon dragged on, the cast continued their winding journey by road from Germany, to Austria and Switzerland and back, against a backdrop of rising media hostility towards Israel’s defensive military campaign.

But far from reducing the ticket-demand, the conflict seemed to heighten the audience’s hunger to come, as in city after city, Christians flocked to the packed-out performances, “to turn up and stand up for Israel”, Chuck said.

The Covenant’s debut performance in Paris even drew a large Jewish contingent and dignitaries from the Israeli Embassy on a night when the whole city was consumed with France’s epic clash with Italy in the World Cup soccer final in Berlin. “It was one of the smaller crowds, but the most responsive”, Chloe said. “It was a very emotional time.”

In total, more than 17,500 people came to see the show during this year’s six-week European season. Among them, a large group of Egyptian Christians who were staying at the same Convent youth hostel in Darmstadt, Germany that hosted The Covenant on 23 July.

Here were a group of Arab young adults, Chloe recalls, aged 18-24 years old, “who all had personal ties to the conflict”. When given the choice to see this Jewish-themed musical from Israel, they all opted to come.

“It really impacted them”, Chuck interjected. “The guys helped with the loading-in and loading-out of the sets; the girls circled Elizabeth and had their pictures taken.”

It was hardly the reaction many would have anticipated, but neither Chuck nor Chloe seemed particularly surprised.

“We were presenting Biblical truth to them”, Chuck explained, and it comes “from the same pages of faith” that we all share.

“Whether Arab or not, they have a responsibility to the truth of the Bible”, he added. “We all do.”
Adventures in paradise

ICEJ in the South Pacific

By Jesma O’Hara

The following morning we left for the highland town of Mt Hagen, where the ICEJ’s South Pacific Representative Victor Schlatter and his lovely wife Elsie had arranged a series of seminars and church services. The Schlatters are held in high regard nationwide, having taught and translated God’s word into many local dialects. Wherever we went we met smiling Melanesian men who told us they were Victor and Elsie’s ‘sons’. We were simply there reaping a harvest from seeds faithfully and carefully planted by this dedicated couple over the course of many years.

Until the 1930s the fertile highland plains, home to the majority of the native tribes, were unknown to the outside world. Anthropologists believe, however, that they are some of the oldest cultivated lands on earth. Even today there are few roads. So it was a hair-raising 3-hour journey for Bruce from Mt Hagen to Mende where several thousand people, some walking for days, had gathered for 2 days of seminars.

I, meanwhile, flew up into the mountains in a tiny missionary plane to Lumusa, where some 1000 believers gathered to attend a Baptist Convention for the indigenous tribal peoples. The welcome was warm and enthusiastic and I soon realised why: They had been praying for 33 years for someone to come and tell them about Israel. Though expecting an Israeli, they seemed quite happy with me!

The gatherings in both places lasted all day and the people never tired of dancing and singing and listening to the teaching we brought. In Mende people sat in the open while the rain came down but no one left until the meetings were over.

Both Bruce and I were humbled and amazed at the sacrificial giving of these folk, most of whom eke out a simple existence on small family plots of land. They wanted to bless Israel and the Jewish people in a practical way.

In Lumusa, for instance, the offering took 2 hours to collect as one after another they came forward with what, for many of them, amounted to real sacrifice on Israel’s behalf. At the same time we had a flag exchange ceremony led by two elderly...
village brothers who had served the Lord in the mountains for over 30 years. They presented me with a Papua New Guinea flag and, when I gave them an Israeli flag, they committed to faithfully pray for the Jewish nation. Long into the nights they sat and discussed the teaching and how they could apply it to their own lives and support the re-born Jewish State.

Back in Port Moresby we spoke on the local television and radio stations. Several of the radio channels told us that they intend using our teaching sessions as part of their future programming. Seminars in the capital were also well attended and our hearts were touched by the commitment and dedication of those who came, including the many young people who assisted us there.

Some 600 years before Jesus, the Prophet Jeremiah wrote that there would come a time to proclaim the regathering of Israel in the coastlands far away (Jeremiah 31:10).

Today, the message of God’s faithfulness to the Jewish people is being received in the far-flung reaches of the Pacific to precious believers, hungry to hear and respond to God’s word.
Half-truth theology

The deception of Replacement theology

By Malcolm Hedding

Recently, I became more keenly aware of the spiritual conflict that rages over Israel. This conflict settles on the battleground of Replacement theology. While we reject this theological concept, it is worth noting that it is a ‘stronghold’ that has strengthened itself over many centuries within churches of all traditions. It is therefore not easily removed and yet we are called to do so with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

To some degree, Replacement theology is so deceptive because it rests on half-truths. For instance, the Church is the “Israel of God” but not in a replacement sense (Galatians 6:14-16). In essence, Replacement theology removes from Israel a national destiny in the land of Canaan because of her rejection of Jesus’ Messianic credentials. All the biblical statements of Israel enjoying future blessings in the land of Canaan are said to be descriptions of the spiritual blessings that now accrue to the Church. The expectation of a physical kingdom has been spiritualised and taken from Israel and given to the Gentiles (Matthew 21:43), even though Jesus never denied that the physical kingdom would be restored to Israel (Acts 1:6-7).

That this way of expounding Scripture completely violates the principles of biblical exposition is of little importance to them. We should interpret Scripture by the nature of the text. If it is literal, then we should interpret it literally, but if it is spiritual or figurative, then we should respond accordingly. For instance, Jesus said, “I am the door!” Does this mean He actually is a door? Of course not! The context is clearly figurative and needs to be interpreted as such.

We are therefore not committed to any singular form of biblical exposition – literal or figurative – but rather to the context. This will determine our style of exposition and therefore we uphold the integrity of Scripture and its authority.

The essentials of Replacement theology

Replacement theology rests chiefly on the idea that the whole or part of the Abrahamic Covenant has been abolished, for it is this Covenant that promises to Israel eternal ownership of the land of Canaan (Genesis 17:7-8).

Once this ‘promise’ has been removed, the present-day restoration of Israel means nothing and her only hope is in the Church. Now it must be made clear that we believe that only in Christ Jesus can there be salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike (Romans 1:16-17). However, we do not believe that the promise of God in the Abrahamic Covenant bequeathing the land of Canaan to Israel has been removed, and therefore Israel’s modern restoration to the land of Canaan is indeed fulfillment of that promise and constitutes a milestone on her ‘way home’ to her Messiah (Ezekiel 36:24-28).

Two points of view

The Replacement camp is divided into two opinions concerning the Abrahamic Covenant:

The Abolitionists

This camp sees the Covenant with Abraham as being entirely abolished. However they have serious difficulties because Paul writing to the Galatians states that Jesus died in order to bring to our lives the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant and if we belong to Jesus, we are Abraham’s children according to the promise (Galatians 3:13-14, 29).

If the Covenant has been abolished, then what Paul says is wrong! Moreover the writer of the Book of Hebrews states that we can trust God to be faithful to the New Covenant because He
has always been faithful to the Abrahamic Covenant (Hebrews 6:13-20). This constitutes a serious problem for the Abolitionists because, if the Abrahamic Covenant has been abolished, then God is a liar and indeed is not faithful, though the writer of Hebrews affirms that He is!

Many Abolitionists have perceived this problem and have consequently moved to the...

**Reconstructionist Camp**

This theory states that the Abrahamic Covenant has indeed not been abolished but it has been reconstructed. That is, the part that promises land to Israel now means spiritual promises and not literal ones. The problem with this theory is:

(a) It is a total presupposition and the Scriptures nowhere affirm it. That all nations would be blessed in Christ was actually the intention of the Abrahamic Covenant from the very beginning, but this does not remove from the Jewish people a national destiny in the Holy Land.

Reconstructionists lay emphasis on Paul’s teaching in the Book of Galatians concerning God’s promise in Abraham being made not to his “seed”, plural, that is the people of Israel, but to his “seed” singular, meaning Jesus (Galatians 3:15-18). Therefore they conclude that since the “seed” Christ has come, the promise to the “seed” of Abraham as in plural – meaning the people – has been removed! They have forfeited the land!

The truth is that Paul also uses the term “Abraham’s seed” in the plural in the New Testament (Romans 9:6-7). In other words both interpretations of the term “seed” are true! Abraham’s seed is singular and plural. The blessing God promised in Abraham is only in Christ Jesus because He died for the whole world, but the mediation or means by which this blessed “seed” comes into the world is through the “seed” plural – the people of Israel. The one truth does not contradict the other. Both truths are in fact interdependent (Romans 9:1-5), hence the extensive genealogy of Jesus given in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38).

The Bible nowhere states that the promises of God in Abraham concerning Israel’s everlasting possession of the Land of Canaan are removed. In fact, everywhere it affirms the opposite! That is, that a day is coming when Israel will be restored to the land and to her Messiah (Ezekiel 36:24-32). This passage from Ezekiel teaches the very opposite of Replacement theology, in that Israel’s rebellion and sin has not led to land forfeiture but to judgment and correction, yet in the end God will, for His Name’s sake, restore Israel to her ancient land and to Himself! He does this in spite of her history of rebellion and sin. The truth is that Replacement theology reflects the heart of man and not that of God!

(b) The Scriptures refute it. Jesus came to confirm the promises to the Fathers, not to reconstruct them (Romans 15:7-9). Confirm means CONFIRM! He takes away nothing but reinforces every promise that God made to the fathers (Acts 3:22-26). Peter affirms that there must be a time of “restoration of all things” before Messiah returns. This “restoration of all things” is spoken about by all the prophets – meaning a final regathering to the Land of Canaan and repentance leading to salvation in Jesus (Amos 9:11-15; Jeremiah 36:26-28).

No wonder the conflict over Zion is so great. Our ministry, partnered with you, is removing the stumbling blocks from Zion and thereby preparing her for the arrival of her great and most blessed King (Isaiah 62:10).

Replacement theology is thus an instrument of the powers of darkness to frustrate the purpose of God, by disconnecting the Church from this final great redemptive initiative in history. We reject it and stand fully on the promises of God concerning Israel and the Church.
The longest war

An overview of the Lebanon conflict

By David Parsons

Over 34 blistering days this summer, the Israeli Defence Forces engaged in a bitter fight with Hizb'Allah forces in Lebanon that turned into Israel’s longest period of sustained combat since the 1948 War of Independence. Indeed, in many ways the nation is still waging the same struggle for its existence that first erupted 58 long years ago.

In Israel’s intervening wars – in 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982 – the IDF faced-off against conventional armies, spared Israeli cities harm by taking the battle onto enemy territory, and swiftly routed often superior foes in astonishing fashion.

But this time – against a well-equipped, well-entrenched and deeply fanatical guerrilla force – it took five weeks to slog five miles into the familiar yet very hostile Lebanese terrain. As a result, the legendary image of IDF might has been tarnished in the eyes of the region, leaving many Israelis asking tough questions of their leaders and wondering how soon before an even wider war is thrust upon them.

Without a Victor

Both Israel and Hizb’Allah are claiming ‘victory’ in the recent conflict, but neither side has come out unscathed since the July 12 cross-border abduction of two Israeli soldiers unleashed an unexpected full-scale IDF response.

The south Beirut neighbourhoods where Hizb’Allah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah once presided over flashy military parades have been laid to waste by precision IAF air strikes. Hundreds of Hizb’Allah fighters are now dead, their bunkers in south Lebanon destroyed, and their rocket arsenals depleted. And although angry at Israel, most Lebanese also believe the Iranian-sponsored Shi’ite terror militia shares blame for the devastation of their country’s infrastructure.

Yet the IDF also got its nose bloodied, and a serious chink in Israel’s armour has been exposed – the glaring lack of an adequate defence against short- and medium-range missiles aimed at its population centers. In total, 43 Israeli civilians were killed in the conflict, most victims of the 4,000 Katyusha rockets that rained down on the Galilee and Haifa areas, while the IDF lost 116 soldiers, most to Russian-designed guided anti-tank missiles supplied by Syria and Iran.

The Path of Indecision

The ‘war in the north’ started off well enough for Israel. Within the first two hours, good intelligence enabled the IAF to locate and destroy most of Hizb’Allah’s longer-range missile launchers and many of its key fortifications and command centers. Relying heavily on air power, the IDF would soon claim it had wiped out 50% of Hizb’Allah’s missile arsenal, while Olmert talked of the “total destruction” of its terrorist infrastructure.

Yet they spoke prematurely, as the Katyusha rocket barrages kept coming and in fact increased – averaging nearly 200 per day for the latter half of the hostilities.
In response, the IDF dispatched limited ground forays into known Hizb’Allah strongholds along the border, tentatively probing the network of defences. Yet weeks after IDF spokesmen announced the capture of towns like Maroun al-Ras and Bint Jbail, Israeli soldiers were still dying there.

The military setbacks forced a call-up of reserves, and still no orders were issued for a massive ground invasion up to the Litani River – considered an obvious move by many, and not only in hindsight. The initial broad public backing of a war meant to remove the threat of Hizb’Allah began to give way to murmurings over why the government and military brass were not acting more decisively.

**Put to a Vote**

Meanwhile the diplomatic gears wound slowly, as the US bought Israel time to weaken Hizb’Allah so that it might be more easily disarmed as demanded by the United Nations Security Council nearly two years ago. But with casualties mounting and mass displacements on both sides of the border, pressure finally peaked for an end to the violence.

The Security Council eventually forged a two-phase plan for bringing the fighting to a halt and then dealing with the underlying causes for the regional tensions. Adopted on August 11, new UNSC resolution 1701 envisioned a “full cessation of hostilities” to be followed in a month’s time or so by a more permanent ceasefire.

In the initial phase, the Council calls on Hizb’Allah to stop all attacks and for IDF troops to cease “offensive military operations.” Israeli forces would gradually withdraw in parallel with the deployment of 15,000 Lebanese army troops and 15,000 UN-led forces in a Hizb’Allah-free zone between the Litani and the Israeli border. The existing 2,000 troops in UNIFIL (the UN Interim Force in Lebanon) would be beefed-up, operate under a more ‘robust’ mandate, assist the Lebanese government and army in exerting control over the entire country, and prevent the re-supply of arms to Hizb’Allah by its patrons Syria and Iran.

Before putting a permanent cease-fire deal before the Security Council soon.

**Back to Square One**

In the wake of the UN vote the fighting did subside, but the quasi-truce remains shaky and the formula for disarming Hizb’Allah appears to be unravelling. Lebanon’s fragile coalition government now prefers that Hizb’Allah voluntarily disarm before they deploy southward, but the Shi’ite group refuses. Instead the two parties have agreed to a compromise deal which allows the radical militia to retain its arms, just not display them in public.

Under these circumstances, countries interested in contributing to the new-and-improved UNIFIL showed a sudden reluctance to do so. Meantime, Israel said that if the Lebanese army does not do so, it may resume its military operations to stop the renewed flow of weapons to Hizb’Allah from across the Syrian border.

Even if the Lebanese and UNIFIL forces take up positions in the south, Hizb’Allah militiamen could still launch rockets from north of the Litani into Israel, and the IDF would be blocked from engaging them with ground troops, leaving air power as Israel’s only means of self-defence.

In short, the whole basis on which Israel agreed to the ceasefire is being undermined, largely due to Hizb’Allah’s perception that the international community still lacks the will to stand up to their determined brand of Muslim fervency. This leaves IDF units scattered throughout south Lebanon in a precarious position, while in the north, residents still worry about when the next lethal volley of Katyushas might come.

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Hizb’Allah would eventually be disarmed while UN Secretary General Kofi Annan would work on resolving the status of the ‘Shaba Farms’ - the strategic Mt Dov plateau in the Golan that has been used by Hizb’Allah as a territorial pretext for its ongoing belligerence against Israel. Annan, meanwhile, would work for the release of the two captured IDF soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev under these circumstances, not just not display them in public.

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