The Journey Inside

Breaking the cycle of trauma that haunts Ethiopian Jews

By Shalle McDonald

“IT IS NO SMALL THING FOR A 13 YEAR OLD GIRL TO TRAVEL BY FOOT ACROSS MOUNTAINS AND DESERTS TO REALIZE A 2000 YEAR-OLD VISION OF COMING HOME TO ISRAEL.”

Many journeys in life are filled with hardships, trials and joys. It is no small thing for any 13 year-old girl to travel by foot across mountains and deserts from Ethiopia to Sudan for endless weeks, in hopes of realizing her people’s 2000 year-old vision of coming home to Israel. Besides observing all the biblical laws concerning kosher diets and keeping Shabbat, the ancient Ethiopian Jewish community always clung to a distant dream of making it home to the Land of Israel one day. But for many, the fulfillment of that dream has come at great cost.

The first major group of Ethiopian Jews – numbering nearly 12,000 – set off for Israel between 1983 and 1984, with only 8,000 completing the journey alive. The perils they faced were too numerous and horrific to recall. Hunger, thirst, attacks by bandits and wild animals, living in refugee camps with rampant disease and malnutrition – these were the dangers every family had to face each day on the exhausting, three-month march to Israel. Many fell along the way.

For the survivors, painful memories of those arduous times were quickly buried and never really dealt with, producing an endless stream of new problems when these newcomers began the process of integrating into a society that did not understand the grueling trials they had just experienced.

As these new Ethiopian immigrants began settling in Israel, local aid agencies focused on providing them with food, shelter and clothing – the basics of life. Yet the trauma of their long and difficult journey remained hidden inside – an unseen root that hindered their ability to adjust to their new, modern surroundings.

Finally, the Israel Center for Psychotrauma at Herzog Hospital discerned that many of these families desperately needed special therapy to deal with the traumatic episodes which many years later were still being pushed aside.

Today, ICEJ AID is assisting the staff at the Israel Center for Psychotrauma as they seek to break the endless cycle of failure among Ethiopian immigrants caused by the trauma of their difficult journey to Israel. With our help, the center is providing individual psycho-traumatic treatments for
The International Christian Embassy 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 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’s United States Branch is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with offices in Washington, D.C. and in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. We are a non-denominational faith ministry supported by the voluntary contributions of our members and friends.

We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by using the enclosed response card to make your donation to the ongoing work and witness of the ICEJ.

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Our High Calling

A true revelation of who God is and what He has done in Christ inspires us to walk in holiness, despite trial and trouble

BY MALCOLM HEDDING

**Our Faith**

In chapters 11 and 12 of Hebrews, “faith” is described as the evidence of things not seen. This kind of faith believes that which cannot be seen is more real than that which can be seen. For us, the finished work of Jesus, His ascent to the right hand of glory, His soon coming, and the existence of the Heavenly City are all more real than all we can see. Though we have not seen God, we have beheld Him veiled in flesh. That revelation of who He is and what He has done for us in Christ inspires us to walk a life of holiness, even if that walk is fraught with trial and difficulty.

According to the writer of Hebrews, this was the way of “the elders” who have gone before us. Like Abraham and all the “great cloud of witnesses,” our eyes are upon Jesus and that glorious coming city. (Hebrews 11:10, 16; 12:1-2)

**Our Walk**

God knows things about us that we ourselves do not know. Thereby He embarks upon a “program of correction” from time to time. That is, He corrects us, rebukes us and chastises us for our own betterment. This is the “walk” of every believer and no matter who we are we cannot escape it. (Hebrews 12:3-11)

The point is, since God knows things about us that we do not know, His program of correction may seem strange and confusing. Given that our lives are clean, we must trust Him and not rebel, grumble or resist. This is precisely what the believers addressed in Hebrews were doing. It is, of course, a common reaction, but nonetheless a carnal one. We must desist from these things and trust God fully with our lives.

**Our Watchfulness**

The writer exhorts His readers to shake off their ‘pity party’, stand tall and follow Jesus. If they fail in this, they will become weaker and the limb that was lame, spiritually speaking, will became ‘dislocated’ (Hebrews 12:12-17). As Paul put it, some become “shipwrecked” in their faith! (1 Timothy 1:19)

The lack of a proper, faith-based spiritual response to our trials and difficulties could leave us spiritually disabled. That is, we could fall short of the grace of God, allow bitterness to take root in our lives, and cause others to be so defiled (Hebrews 12:15).

The proper response in the time of correction is to “pursue peace with all people and holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

Rev. Malcolm Hedding serves as ICEJ Executive Director and travels extensively teaching about Israel and the days in which we live.
Hitler understood the role propaganda played in preparing the way for the extermination of the Jewish people. The steps were first discrimination, second delegitimization and lastly, extermination. We need to understand the role of the global disinformation and propaganda campaign taking place against Israel today and take it seriously.

This current campaign of delegitimization focuses on Israel as though she is the source of all evil in the world. She is not only the obstacle to Palestinian statehood but to world peace. But I want to know this: while orchestrated demonstrations were held around the world against Israel when she moved into Gaza to end the rocket attacks, and while global institutions such as the UN are accusing her of war crimes, and while our academics and mainline churches are calling for divestment - where are the demonstrations against the Iranian government for the incitement to genocide, or for threatening another member-state in the United Nations, or for beating and imprisoning innocent citizens for protesting against a rigged election?

Where are the demonstrations against Hamas who fired 8,000 rockets at innocent Israeli civilians, or for persecuting and murdering Christians in Gaza, or for kidnapping and holding Gilad Shalit for four years! Where are the demonstrations against the Palestinian Authority for glorifying suicide bombers and brainwashing little children to want to become one?

The list goes on and on and if I get started on Sudan, and Egypt and Saudi Arabia we will be here past dinner.

It is really maddening. And to think that while an almost-nuclear Iran is threatening to wipe Israel off the map, the world asks Israel to commit to a nuclear free Middle East! Or get this one: Iran was just elected to a four-year seat on the UN Women’s Rights Commission. Iran does not recognize the basic human rights of women! These are the same institutions condemning Israel for a war of self defense. Israel suffered over 8,000 rocket attacks from a group that ignores the laws of war and not only targets Israeli civilians but uses their own civilians for cover, and then Israel is the one accused of war crimes!

I am telling you that the global campaign against Israel is unprecedented. Its influence is being felt everywhere. While we have been immune to a lot of this in the US I can detect its growing influence here not only in our government, but even in Christian universities, and in the wider Evangelical world.

**A Battle over Values**

So what is behind all of this? First, the enemies of Israel have found a politically correct manner in which to defeat Israel and see the state dismantled. Parts of this campaign are absolutely planned and deliberate with this goal in mind.
Secondly, they have found lots of bedfellows because it is nothing but a new form of antisemitism. While classic antisemitism blames the Jews for the world’s ills, the new antisemitism, anti-Zionism, blames the Jewish nation for the world’s ills. Antisemites have simply found a politically correct way to be antisemitic.

Thirdly, it goes beyond that because Israel is in direct confrontation with the value systems of the world today. We are living in a world that now believes in moral relativism – the belief that there is no right or wrong, good or evil, truth or falsehood – it is all a question of competing narratives. The Jewish nation, which gave the world the Ten Commandments, flies in the face of moral relativism. Israel is also a Jewish state in an age when both religion and nationalism are under assault, therefore her ‘Jewishness’ is being called racism. The world is also becoming increasingly pacifist. Israel, a nation that relies on military force for her very survival, flies in the face of pacifism, hence they call her “Nazi.”

I can’t help but think of two scriptures at this point. Isaiah 5:20 says “woe to those who call evil good and good evil.” And II Thess. 2:11 “Therefore God will send them a great delusion because they did not love the truth.” This is why I am very concerned for our world and the direction in which it is heading.

**A Challenge to Speak the Truth**

So what can we do in the face of such gigantic challenges. There is a saying that comes to my mind that sums it up well: pray as though it is all up to God, and work as though it is all up to you.

Isaiah 62:6-7 says this:

*I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

Jerusalem will no longer be ridiculed, instead she will be praised by all the earth, and it is “He” who will do this. We know that the battle is the Lord’s. And we will pray as though it is all up to Him.

But we also need to roll up our sleeves, see this for the battle that it is and go on the “information offensive.” How do we fight disinformation, but with information. You and I need to tell Israel’s story, over and over, and louder and louder.

We need to tell the world how they are indebted to the Jewish people. The Jewish contribution to religion, science, literature, music, medicine, finance, philosophy, technology etc., is staggering. They are making our world a better place.

We need to tell the Christian world how indebted we are to the Jewish people for everything we hold dear as Christians comes from the Jewish people.

We need to tell our country how indebted we are to Israel. Her intelligence and military technology are helping us and are saving lives of our servicemen and women. Her high tech industry and innovation is fueling Silicon Valley and our economy. She is the only democratic ally we have in the volatile Middle East. A strong US-Israel relationship is not only good for Israel, it is good for America!

The Bible is clear that those who curse Israel and seek to destroy her will suffer the consequences of the very hatred and destruction they foment. As Yehuda Avner, an Israeli author, said just last week in The Jerusalem Post, “our history is that our enemies try to destroy us in every generation, and every time it is they who are destroyed.”

We need to tell Israel’s story not just because it will help Israel, but because it will help our own nation and everyone in the world who will side with truth.

Susan Michael serves as the Director of the ICEJ’s US Branch and speaks regularly at ICEJ educational seminars and events throughout the United States and in Israel. She is a keynote speaker at this year’s Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem.
Berlin Summit Confronts Nazi Agenda

International Directors meet in Germany to renew their resolve to defend the Jewish people

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem held its annual conference for national directors in May in the city of Berlin – the reunited capital of Germany and once the seat of Nazi power.

The gathering drew 75 representatives from some 30 nations, making it one of the best attendance records ever for the yearly conference. There was a strong sense of unity and purpose over the meetings as the ICEJ’s global leadership reviewed the ministry’s first 30 years and charted a clear course for the future.

The ICEJ’s Executive Director, Rev. Malcolm Hedding, opened the conference with an informative overview of Israel’s current status and the priorities today for Christian pro-Israel activism.

Dr. Juergen Buehler, the ICEJ International Director, followed up with an analysis of the unique historical developments which rendered German Christians vulnerable to the dark influence of Nazism. For instance, he noted that for nearly a century liberal German theologians had been questioning the veracity of the Bible and especially the Old Testament accounts of Israel’s early history.

Delegates then visited the infamous Villa Wannsee, a Nazi party resort center on a scenic lake outside Berlin where the “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” was decided on 20 January 1942. More than a million Jews had already been randomly murdered in Eastern Europe by roving SS execution squads, but this gathering of 14 key figures from various government ministries and security branches approved a plan at the direction of Adolf Hitler for carrying out the efficient mass extermination of the remaining 11 million Jews of Europe. The chilling minutes of that gathering, known as the Wannsee Protocol, remain on public display at the restored Villa.

The up-close encounter with this depraved Nazi agenda only served to reinvigorate the ICEJ delegates in their collective resolve to comfort and defend the Jewish state and people today.

The latter part of the director’s conference thus focused on the many exciting practical projects which the ICEJ is presently engaged in, both in Israel and worldwide, including expanded aliya operations, various charitable and social aid projects, and the Grafted program for young adults. Learn more at: www.icejusa.org.

ICEJ International Directors & staff at the Villa Wannsee (above) and the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin during their May 2010 summit.
these Ethiopian olim (newcomers). In one such program, the center films their stories on video as a means of walking them through a therapeutic healing process at both the individual and group levels.

Asher Rahamim, the director of services for the Ethiopian Jewish community at Herzog Hospital, explained that “personal treatment is very significant because it enables them to tell the story that they couldn’t before in front of family members. And it gives them permission to talk, and to know how to deal with memories. To help them see it differently.”

“When you tell of the journey, the whole atmosphere changes... They are closing the circle. It enables them to see the process [of integration] and it is something they go through together,” Rahamim added.

This closure is so needed, he explained, because many Ethiopian Jews face a whole new shock trying to transition into becoming Israelis. In Ethiopia, people lived as a close-knit community, sharing everything. But in Israel, the family unity gets fractured, as everyone is spread out. Parental counseling was always a foundation of life in Ethiopia, but it loses its centrality in Israel because of the reduced emphasis on communal living.

This crisis alone has “created an empty space of support, lack of respect of the father, language barriers,” he said. There is also a tendency towards silence, as Ethiopians typically process life quietly as a group. “Cutting at the very root of family life and ridding the family of spiritual authority and leadership is a whole new trauma for these immigrants,” Rahamim insisted.

These complex issues facing Ethiopian Jews help one understand better the high suicide rate among them, as well as their much higher rate of post-traumatic stress disorder than the general Israeli population. “Putting down your identity to become something else in order to fit into society is not easy,” Rahamim said.

Immigration and absorption centers and Ethiopian community advocates must thus learn how to be innovative in providing the assistance and care they need.

Another ICEJ-AID project for Ethiopian Jews involves those youth who have been disconnected from their family roots in the effort to fit into Israeli society. Many are considered high-risk. They may have lost respect for parents who cannot speak Hebrew and thus are unable to find a decent-paying job. Some 70% of Ethiopian Jews in Israel live below the poverty line, and many youngsters end up dropping out of school and are eventually placed in detention centers.

ICEJ AID has partnered with Sha’ale Tikvah, an after-school program in the “Harlem” area of Bet Shemesh which targets teenagers in the last stages to delinquency. This facility provides them with a safe place to come and gain stronger reading abilities, which will prevent many from dropping out of school due to difficulties with Hebrew and behavioral problems. They also have trained social workers to meet with their parents in an effort to create a wider circle of assistance and bring the family members closer together. So far, not one of the teens in their program has dropped out of school!

After some 25 years since the first mass wave of Ethiopian Jews arrived in Israel, the lack of awareness of the unique challenges they present has decreased significantly. But in the beginning, workers from the absorption centers did not understand they should have been helping the Ethiopians adjust to more than just a modern world of sinks, toilets, elevators, and paying bills on time. Still, new Ethiopian arrivals today face even new challenges, as Israel becomes ever more developed and urbanized.

Yet even with all these difficulties, Rahamim assured that, “You won’t find people among the Ethiopian community who will say they don’t love Israel. To have the privilege to live here and keep a strong connection to the land, to Jerusalem, is worth the cost.”

ICEJ AID is there seeking to touch their lives on behalf of our faithful Christian donors and friends worldwide. Please support projects like this one by making your tax-deductible gift to our ongoing work throughout the nation of Israel today.

Shallé McDonald is a staff writer with the ICEJ News team in Jerusalem

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