It started innocuously enough on March 8th, as Vice President Joe Biden landed in Tel Aviv as part of a carefully choreographed attempt to broker ‘proximity talks’ between Israel and the Palestinians. After months of behind-the-scenes diplomacy, US envoy George Mitchell had - that very afternoon - finally persuaded a reluctant Mahmoud Abbas to agree to indirect talks with Israel. Mitchell’s achievement was significant in the face of the Palestinian leader’s insistence there was no point in negotiating anything while Netanyahu was at the helm.

Everything appeared to be going to plan when, the following morning, officials in the Jerusalem municipality released a series of planning permits for 1,600 new housing units in the northern Jewish neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo. The Palestinians cried foul, the deal broke down and Mitchell left empty-handed. Despite Netanyahu’s assurance to Biden that the announcement was legal, the picture caption on the BBC website said it all. Two young Palestinian boys with scarves wrapped around their faces were hurling stones into the distance, presumably at the gathered line of Israeli security forces trying to restore order nearby. It’s a familiar picture by journalistic standards, and the online editorial team of Britain’s national broadcaster clearly did not feel the need for a deeper explanation save one: “Palestinians feel they are being squeezed out of East Jerusalem.”

There are few places in the world where feelings matter more. Irrespective of whether Palestinians are being ‘squeezed’ or not, if they feel squeezed, they are entitled to riot. The world, meanwhile, looks on with understanding - even approval - as they do.

“They are igniting the whole situation,” 55-year old Amran Dari tells BBC reporter Heather Sharp. “This government is not like any other government that has governed Israel.”

In some respects Mr. Dari is right. The government of Benjamin (‘Bibi’) Netanyahu is an eclectic mix of dovish leftists, hawkish nationalists and orthodox religious. But the sight of urban liberals and hilltop settlers sitting around the same Israeli cabinet table is not that unusual. What sets the current government apart is the degree to which they have buried their differences and coalesced around the issue of Jerusalem – the touchstone of the entire Middle East conflict.

By Michael Hines

It started innocuously enough on March 8th, as Vice President Joe Biden landed in Tel Aviv as part of a carefully choreographed attempt to broker ‘proximity talks’ between Israel and the Palestinians. After months of behind-the-scenes diplomacy, US envoy George Mitchell had - that very afternoon - finally persuaded a reluctant Mahmoud Abbas to agree to indirect talks with Israel. Mitchell’s achievement was significant in the face of the Palestinian leader’s insistence there was no point in negotiating anything while Netanyahu was at the helm.

Everything appeared to be going to plan when, the following morning, officials in the Jerusalem municipality released a series of planning permits for 1,600 new housing units in the northern Jewish neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo. The Palestinians cried foul, the deal broke down and Mitchell left empty-handed. Despite Netanyahu’s assurance to Biden that the announcement
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.

Please mail all donations to:
PO Box 440276
Nashville, TN 37244

Or make your tax-deductible gift online:
www.icejusa.org

For more information and registration details go to:
www.icejusa.org/pastors or call: 1-800 379-3897

2010 PASTORS CONFERENCE & HOLY LAND TOUR
July 2-9, 2010: Galilee, Jerusalem

For more information and registration details go to:
www.icejusa.org/pastors or call: 1-800 379-3897

---

FEAST OF TABERNACLES XXXI
Sept 23rd-29th, 2010

Malcolm Hedding
Reinhard Bonnke
Mosi Madugba
Susan Michael

For 2010 feast hotel & tour options call toll free: 1-800 379-3897

www.icejusa.org/feast
Remember Abraham

The Abrahamic Covenant is the Foundation Stone of Salvation

By David Parsons

The Passover season is a special time for reflection on the rich spiritual truths this holiday holds for those of biblical faith. For Christians living in Israel, it also can tug in two directions: Do we focus with our Jewish neighbors on the incredible Exodus of the Hebrew children from bondage in ancient Egypt or on the riveting Passion of Christ at that memorable Passover some fifteen centuries later?

Both events are deeply impacting, yet followers of Jesus realize they are inter-related and that the truths of the one are reinforced in the other. Deliverance from Pharaoh’s taskmasters becomes freedom from slavery to sin. The blood of lambs sprinkled on doorposts foreshadows the precious blood of the Lamb shed on the Cross.

Another interesting parallel is that both events occurred because of God’s covenant promises to Abraham.

In Exodus 2, the Bible says that when the children of Israel cried out to the Almighty because of their bondage in Egypt, “God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham....” This is in reference to Abraham’s vision in Genesis 15, when God promised to deliver his descendants from bondage in 400 years.

In the New Testament as well, we are told in Luke 1:72-73 that the Messiah’s imminent coming was because God desired “to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham....”

Paul also explains in Galatians 3 that Christ came and died in order to fulfill God’s promise to Abraham that through him “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”

So Passover reminds us that Abraham is a towering figure of faith, and the Abrahamic covenant is the foundation stone for both the salvation of the individual believer as well as for the collective redemption of the nation of Israel. It runs like a golden thread throughout Scripture, and so we have good reason to “remember Abraham.”

In fact, this was the simple, yet powerful thought invoked by Moses after the sin of the Golden Calf. Hot with anger, God wanted to wipe out the Israelites and start all over with Moses. But Moses pleaded “remember Abraham,” and God relented (Exodus 32:13).

We are further told in Romans 11 that even though the Jewish people have been made enemies of the gospel for the Gentiles’ sake, “concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers” — meaning Abraham and the Patriarchs. How amazing to think it is possible to leave such a rich spiritual legacy, that it can still bestow the favor of God on one’s descendants many generations later!

So indeed, we would do well to remember Abraham.

With this in mind, it is astonishing to see the tepid response within the wider Christian world to the recent controversy over the traditional tomb of Abraham in Hebron.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has included the Cave of the Patriarchs on the government’s new list of 150 “heritage sites” in the Land that it plans to promote and preserve for posterity. The Palestinians, backed by the Arab/Islamic bloc, have threatened a “religious war” over this simple, benign gesture.

The international community has followed with knee-jerk condemnations of the Israeli move, with the Obama administration robotically calling it “provocative and unhelpful.” And the Christian establishment could seem to care less — or if they do it is to side with Muslim bigotry.

The Jewish connection to this place is immemorial. The Bible records that this burial cave was the first plot of land purchased by Abraham in the land promised to him by God. A millennia-long Jewish tradition holds that he rests there along with Isaac, Jacob, and the biblical matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca and Leah. It is the second holiest site in Judaism, after the Temple Mount. It should go without saying that Christians ought to honor the place as well.

Netanyahu has further assured that no real change will be made in the status quo at the site. Funds are being earmarked to renovate both the synagogue and the Ibrahimi mosque which share this revered site, as well as to install restrooms and build a roof over an outdoor prayer area.

There is nothing objectionable in this decision and everything right with it — except for those who want to erase the Jewish connection to the land.

David Parsons serves as ICEJ Media Director in Jerusalem. This article first appeared in The Jerusalem Post Christian Edition.
O
ver the past two years, the ICEJ has intensified its efforts to assist elderly Holocaust survivors in Israel, many of whom are living in poverty and suffering from serious illnesses. In one such program, ICEJ-AID has partnered with the local charity L’Chaim in a special project that allows Christians to ‘adopt’ survivors struggling with their troubled memories and advancing age. Through this program, your family, church or prayer group can sponsor regular in-home visits to survivors by Israeli high school students, as well as provide them with food and help pay for their utility bills and home repairs.

Last year, the ICEJ’s Grafted young adults department decided to commit to helping one such survivor. Recently, Grafted staff member Tirza Kampert joined ICEJ-AID for an in-home visit to meet their ‘adopted’ Holocaust survivor and see how he was faring. The encounter was quite impacting for everyone.

Roman Gorban lives with his wife Fanny in Kiryat Shmona, near Israel’s northern border. Originally from the Ukraine, he made aliyah to Israel in 1998 together with his mother Tatiana, who is now 90. Today, they are the only family in Israel with both a mother and son who survived the Holocaust.

Tatiana has cancer and is bedridden and was recently moved to a 24-hour nursing facility that Roman visits twice a week in Haifa. Along with her declining health from years of malnourishment and physical labour, Tatiana – like many Ukrainian Jews – still suffers traumatic symptoms from the horrible atrocities she endured and witnessed during the Nazi occupation nearly seven decades ago.

After the Nazis invaded, Roman and his mother were able to miraculously escape a Jewish ghetto in the Vinnitsa region of the Ukraine. Life in the ghetto had been unbearable with its overcrowding, hunger and disease. Thousands starved to death.

One day soldiers in the Romanian army, who often did the Nazis’ bidding, opened fire on a building where Tatiana was standing in the entrance with her 13-month-old daughter in her arms. Her daughter was killed and Tatiana lost a finger and suffered a shoulder injury. She still feels pain to this day from the bullet wound, which serves as a constant reminder of her daughter’s death.

Roman was then hidden by his grandfather, sparing his life. Later on, the grandfather bribed a soldier to let his family escape the ghetto, including Tatiana and Roman.

As Tirza and the ICEJ team listened to Roman tell his story, it brought tears to their eyes. “We are so thankful that you have shared your story with us and that we can have this relationship together”, she told him. “We really need to know what happened to the Jewish people in the Holocaust.”

Taylor Innes serves as a staff writer with the ICEJ Media team in Jerusalem

Bridge across the Generations
ICEJ Young Adults Reach out to Holocaust Survivors
By Taylor Innes
Haifa’s Hostel of Hope  
Project Update  

Over recent weeks, the ICEJ has been raising funds for a special project in Haifa – expanding an assisted-living facility for Holocaust survivors. In early January, we gave an initial gift of $25,000 from our German branch for the charitable group Yad Ezer L’Haver (Helping Hands to Friends) to take possession of the ground floor of a building next door to their current hostel which houses 16 survivors.

Since that time the ICEJ has continued to raise funds to purchase the remaining floors of the building, which will be able to house up to 80 more survivors in a facility that provides free lodging, food and medical treatment.

So far we have collected over $300,000 within Germany alone, while other countries are also reporting in on the very positive response they are getting to this truly unique humanitarian project. These funds will be able to secure possession of the building and help cover the costs of extensive renovations, as well as the installation of an elevator to serve its elderly residents.

Recently, ICEJ International Director Juergen Buehler and members of the ICEJ AID team travelled to Haifa to discuss the project further with Shimon Sabag, founder of Yad Ezer. Plans were made to send several Christian volunteer groups of builders and craftsmen from Germany to assist with the renovations over coming weeks, with the aim of opening the new facility by Yom Hashoah, Israel’s annual Holocaust Remembrance Day, which falls this year in mid-April.

More than 850 people, mostly survivors of Nazi death camps in Poland and Germany, have already signed up on the waiting list to apply for a place in this new facility.

Please give generously as we forge ahead with this vital and timely project.

Learn more at: www.icejusa.org/adopt
The Ends of the Earth

By Jürgen Bühler

The Bible speaks often about its heavenly truths one day reaching “to the ends of the earth.” In fact, this expression is used some fifty times in Scripture. During the Middle Ages, this phrase was taken quite literally, as sailors had a fear that they might one day fall off the edge of the world.

Yet other passages of the Bible were already there to inform us that the world was not flat. In Isaiah 40:22, we are told that God “sits above the circle of the earth.” Thus, we know that “the ends of the earth” refers rather to the farthest known reaches of human civilization in relation to Israel, which lies at the center. Jesus spoke about the “queen of the South” coming from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon’s wisdom (Matthew 12:42) and Isaiah also speaks repeatedly of the distant “coastlands” and “isles afar off” at the ends of the earth.

In a very real sense, God has a heart for even the remotest region of His world. “For He looks to the ends of the earth,” says Job 28:24. In the great Messianic prophecy of Psalm 2, the Lord gives His servant king “the ends of the earth for Your possession.” The Bible also declares that one day His salvation will reach to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47), so that the praises of God will be heard there (Isaiah 42:10).

The very last words of Jesus to his disciples directed them towards these remote regions of the world: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

All this demonstrates that the earth and everything that is within it is the Lord’s. He is the Creator of the ends of the earth (Isaiah 40:28) and their possessor. It also means there is no region in this world which God ignores, nor any country or city which He does not love.

Every year at the Feast of Tabernacles, we are privileged to witness the incredible expanse of God’s family today, as people from more than 100 nations journey from the utmost parts of the earth to worship the Lord in Jerusalem. It is a wonderful foretaste of the day when the Lord “will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven” (Mark 13:27).

A few years ago, our ICEJ branch in the Fiji Islands invited me to speak at a special Israel Day event. I did not know what to expect but I was surprised to see buses arriving with people from everywhere on the island. During the Polynesian-style worship in the packed hall of Suva, the capital of Fiji, tears streamed down my cheeks. Suddenly, I realised where I had arrived. There is no place on earth farther away from Israel than the South Pacific Islands. The saving message of Jesus Christ had literally reached the ends of the earth, and Fiji today is 90% Christian.

Then this past November, our Finnish branch organized a series of meetings in Lapland. In remote villages some 300 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle, where we again did what the Hebrew Prophets had foretold: “Declare, proclaim this, utter it to the end of the earth; Say, ‘The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob!’” (Isaiah 48:20).

The restoration of Israel is a global message to the Church that we are proclaiming from the Polar regions even to the isles of the Tropics. This biblical message holds that while God warned the Israelites they would be scattered to the “ends of the earth” for not obeying His voice, the Lord also promised to bring them back “from the ends of the earth” because of His faithfulness to them.

In keeping with this divine promise, the ICEJ’s ongoing Aliyah program, directed by Howard Flower, is actively seeking out Jewish remnants from the remotest areas of Siberia and as far north as Murmansk, offering them assistance on the journey home to Israel.

In Isaiah 43:6, God vows: “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not keep them back!’ Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth.”

Please stand with us as we fulfill this biblical mandate to reach out from Zion to the ends of the world. Consider making a gift this month to the ongoing work of the ICEJ.

Dr. Jürgen Bühler serves as
ICEJ International Director in Jerusalem
May 21-23, Murfreesboro TN

Join us for our 2010 Spring Teaching Conference, featuring three days of rich Bible teaching and inspirational testimony just outside Nashville.

Guest speakers this year include Nonie Darwish author of *Now They Call Me Infidel*, founder of Arabs for Israel and director of Former Muslims United. The daughter of a prominent Egyptian army chief who was assassinated by the Israeli Defence Forces in the 1950s, she is now an outspoken critic of Islamic violence against Jews and Christians in the Middle East.

Other speakers include ICEJ Executive Director Malcolm Hedding and conference host, Allen Jackson, senior pastor of World Outreach Church in Murfreesboro TN.

Conference opens 7pm Friday May 21st and closes noon Sunday May 23rd. For more details, hotel and booking information call (615) 895-9830.

Registration $20 per person. Register Now.  

www.icejusa.org/events
was procedural, not political, and had taken place without his prior knowledge or consent, the Obama administration was left fuming.

Two days later Secretary of State Hillary Clinton - at the personal direction of the President – called Netanyahu, telling him that the announcement was “an insult to the United States.” By the weekend Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren was quoted telling Foreign Ministry officials in Washington that relations with the US had hit the lowest point in 35 years.

Back in Jerusalem, the Palestinians seized on the discord, denouncing the ‘extremism’ of the Netanyahu government despite the fact that both sides of the political spectrum endorsed his basic position. Meanwhile Palestinian youths rushed the streets before Friday prayers, throwing stones and firebombs at police and Jewish worshippers at the Western Wall, justified – in the eyes of the BBC – by feeling “squeezed out of East Jerusalem” by the construction of 1,600 new apartments in a city of 750,000.

Two weeks later, in a bid to repair the widening rift with the US administration, Netanyahu flew to Washington to restate his case before the annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a position he insisted that has been followed by every successive Israeli government for 42 years.

“The Jewish people were building Jerusalem 3,000 years ago,” he told the AIPAC gathering, “and the Jewish people are building Jerusalem today. Jerusalem is not a settlement. It is our capital.” His words ensured that he received a frosty reception at the White House the following evening, conspicuously deprived of the customary joint statement and photograph. A series of lengthy meetings with President Obama and his staff failed to reconcile the divide.

As the dust settles on one of the most tumultuous months in US-Israeli relations for many years, one thing has become clear: Netanyahu’s determination to keep Jerusalem united under Israel is no longer acceptable to the US and thus is being blamed for the failure to re-start peace talks.

Yet in June 2008 the government of Ehud Olmert approved 1,300 housing units in the same northern Jerusalem neighborhood and this did not stop bi-weekly face-to-face negotiations with Abbas. At the end of these talks, Olmert offered the Palestinians 97% of the West Bank, the division of Jerusalem and opened the door for the symbolic return of thousands of Palestinian refugees. Abbas turned him down.

Now, nearly two years later, President Obama understands that the Palestinians will simply not deal with Netanyahu. He drives too hard a bargain and holds too firm a line. Better to demonize his government and squeeze him out of the picture in the hope that the restless Israelis will finally put someone more amenable into office.

Someone who will perhaps take Olmert’s offer to divide Jerusalem as the starting point for a new round of concessions?

Michael Hines serves as US Media Director and is former editor of the ICEJ Daily News Service in Jerusalem.