SEVENTY YEARS SINCE THE HOLOCAUST
A TIME FOR REFLECTION AND REDEDICATION
Dear friends,

In April, all of Israel was commemorating the Holocaust. The nation’s annual day of remembrance Yom HaShoah is held to honour the six million Jews who were brutally murdered in the Nazi genocide. And every year, the ICEJ is an active part of the official state ceremonies on this day at Yad Vashem, the revered memorial and museum in Jerusalem dedicated to preserving their memory.

Though launched by pagan Nazis, the Holocaust was actually the tragic climax of a long history of Christian anti-Semitism. For centuries, many of the established churches of Europe taught that God was finished with the Jewish people and had abandoned them. They believed that the Church had replaced Israel and all there was left for the Jews is the wrath of God for rejecting their Messiah.

Yet the Bible tells us differently. For instance, the Apostle Paul clearly foresees a glorious future for Israel. He understood that although they might be even enemies of the Gospel, the Lord God still loves them (Romans 11:28). He understood that even in their sin and unbelief, God used them to bring forth incredible blessings to the world. He then reasons, “if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?” (Romans 11:15). In other words, the best is yet to come! Indeed, there is a glorious future for Israel.

Paul states this principle so beautifully, that even “if we are faithless, He remains faithful; [for] He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). What a great comfort that is for Israel, as well as for us as Gentile believers today!

We may never fully understand why Christians over the centuries could not see this truth. But what we can do today is to act upon the revealed truth God has given us about our need to bless Israel. It is nothing short of a miracle that today, 70 years after the Holocaust, many Israelis see Evangelical Christians as strategic partners for Israel’s future.

So, we invite you to be part of this modern-day miracle through the channel of the Christian Embassy here in the heart of Jerusalem.

May the Lord bless you richly from Zion!

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ Executive Director
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I will never forget as a high school student watching my father being used by God as a pastor. I saw people getting saved, healed and delivered, and I developed a passion to become a pastor like my dad. One day, I told my father of my plans to go to Bible school and follow in his footsteps. I assumed he would be excited. But I will always remember his reply: “Son, if you feel called to the ministry I advise you to first study a secular profession. Go get yourself a job in construction!”

Over the years, I understood why he said this. Being a construction worker himself, he started to evangelise on weekends. The ministry quickly grew so that eventually he needed to devote his full time to it. But his experience as a construction worker always helped him speak the language of ordinary people and to easily connect with those in church. In the eight churches he established, people always considered him ‘one of us’. He would plan and build the church buildings himself. Until the very last years before his death, physical labour always remained an important part of his life.

The first ‘Pentecostal’
In the book of Exodus, we find the very first passage on someone “being filled with the Spirit of God”. Think for a minute - who could this be? Was it Moses the great lawgiver, or Aaron the high priest, or the 70 elders who prophesied? It was none of them.

“So, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship.” (Exodus 31:2–5)

So the first person the Bible speaks about being “filled with the Spirit of God” was not a clergyman but a manual labourer. Bezalel might not have known how to lead worship, preach or prophesy but he knew how to cut wood and stones, and work with metals and other materials.

This gives incredible dignity to the labours of our hands. From the very beginning, work had a unique value for God. He even identifies with Himself. The deities of antiquity are known for spending their lives in revelry and pleasure, but the God of the Bible was a worker - the Maker of heaven and earth. He is “the Creator of the ends of the earth, Who neither faints nor is weary” (Isaiah 40:28). Yet despite such omnipotence and inexhaustible energy, He still paused after six days of work and sanctified the seventh day as a day of rest.
The Jewish work ethos

Work is highly regarded in Jewish tradition: “Love work!” is the Talmudic maxim of Sameas. Another sage proclaimed: “Greater is the merit of industry than of idle piety.”

This ran counter to the Greek approach to life. According to Aristotle, physical labour was a “corrupt waste of time” which was necessary so the élite might engage in “pure exercises of the mind” - art, philosophy and politics.

In contrast, the Bible first places man in the Garden of Eden to “to tend and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). The Garden was not a place of eternal holiday but of fulfilling tasks. God blesses the work of our hand (Deuteronomy 28:12). The Hebrew word for work (oved) is also often used to describe our service and worship to God.

The strict division between the sacred and secular in many cultures barely exists in the Bible. The entire nation of Israel was considered a royal priesthood, meaning everyone was sacred to God.

Jesus himself was a carpenter (or stone mason), likely starting out from around the age of twelve. This means he worked for some 18 years at manual labour until he was 30, and spent only three years in “spiritual ministry”. That is a ratio of 6:1. But even in heaven Jesus is back in the construction business, as he said he was going there to prepare a home for us (John 14:2-3).

Redeem your time

Now it is true that our labours have been cursed since the fall of man. In today’s world, work has become an unpleasant necessity in order to provide for our families.

Our work often seems unfulfilling and the fruits do not always match our efforts. But in the word of God we find a way to redeem and give meaning to our daily work.

The Apostle Paul makes an amazing statement to the believing slaves in Ephesus. Slaves often had little say in their type of work and their heavy labours left little time to ponder God’s will for their lives. Yet Paul writes to them:

“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.” (Ephesians 6:5–8)

Paul said it is not so much the type of work you do but your attitude that counts. These words elevated those at the bottom of society.

No matter what work we do, we can use it to glorify God.

You might serve the harshest master but if your work is done “as to Christ”, your work place is transformed into a sanctuary. You no longer serve a despotic ruler but you become “bondservants of Christ doing the will of God”.

Similarly, Paul writes to the church in Corinth: “... whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). No matter what work we do, we can use it to glorify God. By working with such an attitude, we attract the blessing of God upon our work. Whether you hammer nails as a carpenter, write letters as a secretary, program computer files, teach children in school, or sweep the floors of a hospital – if you do your best as if to God, your work place becomes a sanctuary of worship.

Actually, this notion was a key part of the Reformation and became known as the "Protestant work ethic". The philosopher Max Weber credits the advances of Western societies to this biblical, pietistic attitude.

I want to encourage you this Pentecost to invite the Holy Spirit afresh into your life. Ask God to fill your life’s daily pursuits with His Spirit as with Bezalel some 3500 years ago. This means that our worship will be for more than just two hours a week in the Sunday service, but will last 24/7.

With this biblical attitude, we can redeem our time, labours and even every segment of our lives. God will then prosper the work of our hands.

In my own work, whether as a scientist or here at the Christian Embassy, I have experienced God’s Spirit giving me wisdom and direction. I have equally felt His guidance as I used a nano-second laser in the laboratory as when writing teachings like this.

No matter what our work is, God is looking on it and more importantly on our hearts. We should welcome His Spirit and anointing as we operate a lathing unit as much as when we can invite His presence into our prayer meetings.

This, of course, does not preclude that He might call us into full-time ministry within the Church. It is the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers who are given to God’s people as gifts to equip us to meet life’s daily challenges (Ephesians 4:11f). But in that sense every one of us - whether a homemaker and mother, a gardener or an accountant - we all become ‘full time ministers’ if all our work is unto Him.

I pray that this Pentecost, the Spirit of God will come “in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” to anoint you afresh so that you can become a powerful testimony for Christ wherever He has placed you. ✝️
Many today look around at the rising threat of radical Islam and the weak Western response and wonder if we are repeating the costly mistakes of a bygone era.

No doubt we live in perilous times. The clever mass murderers of al-Qaeda have now morphed into the sadistic executioners of Islamic State. Iran is exporting its own fierce brand of Islamic militancy, destabilizing and devouring nations across the Middle East, while building a renegade nuclear weapons program to further its expansionist agenda. Each of these radical Islamist movements see themselves as the vanguard of that final jihadist surge which will ultimately destroy Israel, spread throughout the world, and subjugate humanity to a foretold 'golden age' of Islamic rule. Meanwhile, many Western leaders are pressuring the small democratic nation of Israel to sacrifice the heart of its ancient homeland to secure an illusionary peace and pacify these ravenous beasts.

So is it really 1938 again? Are we seeing an appeasement of great evil like Neville Chamberlain at Munich?

The comparison is not without its merits. In September 1938, the British prime minister was negotiating with Adolf Hitler in hopes of stemming the threat of Nazism and buying “Peace for our Time!” The price was a strip of land along Germany’s border with the small democratic Czech Republic. In Prague, an emergency session of the Czech cabinet sat helplessly for hours awaiting word from Munich, with absolutely no say in their own nation’s fate. In the end Hitler’s appetite for conquest was whetted, not abated. And Chamberlain’s diplomatic mission became an infamous symbol of failed statesmanship.

But lest we pan the British premier too much, we should recall that this was an entire era of failed statesmanship, as Western leaders made decision after decision which signalled the Nazis that the resistance against them was feeble.

Just two months before Munich, representatives from 32 nations gathered at the Evian conference to consider taking in more endangered Jews from Germany. Hitler openly mocked the gathering’s “deep sympathy for these criminals”. Yet the Dominican Republic stood alone as the only country present willing to accept a large number of Jewish refugees. Nazi observers at the conference reported back to Hitler: “You can do what you like with the Jews, nobody is interested in them.”

The next summer saw the tragic voyage of the St. Louis, a ship packed with 900 German Jewish children who could see the lights of Miami off the bow before being turned away by the Roosevelt administration, only to be returned to the sinking continent of Europe.

That same year of 1939, Britain issued the shameful White Paper strictly limiting the number of Jewish refugees who could enter mandatory Palestine – a decision that consigned millions of Jews to the Nazi gas chambers.
Then there was that one dark night in November 1938, when the world stood by as the Nazis arrested over 30,000 Jews and burned more than one thousand synagogues on Kristallnacht. By morning the Sudetenland – surrendered to Hitler at Munich just five weeks earlier – had become the first territory in the Nazi grasp to be made judenrein. The Holocaust had begun!

So it was an entire era of failed statesmanship, not just by one but by many world leaders, who misjudged character and misread intentions with catastrophic results. And the reason this collective failure befell the community of nations is because it was an era of great seductions and deceptions on a global scale. Like a two-edged sword, men were fooled by others but they also fooled themselves.

The German people were seduced by a mesmerizing figure who promised to restore Germany’s tattered fortunes, but instead brought the nation to ruin.

Chamberlain seduced himself into thinking Munich was about one small strip of border land, when in fact the whole expanse of Europe was at stake.

At Evian, an American president coolly calculated that 30,000 Jewish immigrants per year was enough, completely oblivious that 55 million souls of all races and creeds would soon perish in the ensuing deluge of war.

An entire world seduced itself into believing that Hitler was merely venting in Mein Kampf, when in fact he meant every word.

All these missteps helped trigger an unprecedented global conflict which ended seven years later with the unimaginable sight of mushroom clouds rising over incinerated Japanese cities.

So we have to be grateful for a leader of sober thinking and steel resolve like Winston Churchill, who rose up just in time to begin confronting the Nazi threat for what it truly was. Shudder the thought that Hitler had gotten to the Bomb first.

Such alert, tenacious statesmanship is sorely needed again today, as the seductions at operation in our time are even more sinister and deceptive. Indeed, the Bible clearly warns of seducing spirits in the last days, such as Paul’s admonition: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come... evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (2 Timothy 3:1, 13)

And in a nuclear age, the margin of error for misjudging character and misreading intentions is mercilessly razor thin.

One powerful deception today sees Israel’s surrender of the West Bank as a small sacrifice for the sake of peace in our time, when in fact it would only whet the appetite of global jihad.

Another reasons that mankind has not used atomic weapons against each other for the last 70 years now, enticing us into thinking it will not happen again. The film footage from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and all those nuclear tests on Bikini Atoll, are so old and grainy they pre-date the digital age. Likewise, the ‘experts’ lull us to sleep by explaining that Iran – as with North Korea – launched its nuclear program merely as a guarantee against regime change, when its true purpose is as a frightening instrument of Islamic conquest.

So the P5+1 nations are quibbling with Tehran over the inspection of centrifuges, when their real burden should be for preventing the incineration of cities.

And like before, world leaders insist the Ayatollahs are only venting when they cry, “Death to Israel! Death to America!”, when in fact they mean every word!
The greatest threat facing the world today is Iran's relentless drive for nuclear weapons, which would help shield its aggressive campaign to spread terrorism, endanger Israel, and dominate the Middle East. Iran already is the leading sponsor of global terrorism, and has repeatedly vowed to “wipe Israel off the map”. Now, this radical regime is only a few short steps away from having the ability to build and deliver nuclear warheads, which would only embolden the Ayatollahs in the pursuit of their destructive goals.

In response, the ICEJ-USA branch delivered a petition in March to both the White House and top Congressional leaders which was signed by more than 23,000 American citizens demanding that Iran be made to dismantle its nuclear program and that the US Congress have a say in any nuclear agreement with Tehran. An accompanying letter was also signed by dozens of prominent American Christian leaders representing tens of millions of citizens which mirrored these same demands.

The petition signatures were collected by ICEJ-USA in the short span of three weeks after media reports made clear the Obama administration was seeking a deal by the end of March which would have allowed Iran to keep much of its nuclear program intact.

ICEJ-USA national director Susan Michael delivered the grassroots petition and Christian leadership letter to the White House, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, House Speaker John Boehner, and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi.

In the wake of this petition, the Obama White House conceded to Congress the right to review any deal reached with Iran. But the battle has only begun!

The P5+1 world powers are still negotiating with Iran, with the deadline for a final comprehensive agreement now set for June 30th, which means there are only a few weeks left to try to prevent more concessions and avert a bad deal.

Thus, the ICEJ is opening up this petition drive over coming months to its global constituency and will present the results to the foreign ministers of the Western democratic nations now negotiating with Iran, as well as to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

The ICEJ’s global petition demands that any nuclear deal with Iran require that:

1) Iran must completely dismantle its nuclear program to ensure the regime never achieves the ability to make an atomic bomb.

2) Keep international sanctions on Iran in place until Tehran dismantles its nuclear program and abandons its destructive goals of spreading radical Islamic terrorism, destroying Israel, and achieving regional hegemony.

Now is your chance to stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons. Tell world leaders involved in the talks: “Not One Bomb for Iran.” Don’t be silent in the face of this intolerable threat! Join us as we take a stand for the safety of ourselves and our children.

To sign the "Not One Bomb For Iran" petition, or for more information, visit: www.notonebombforiran.info
CHRISTIANS MARK 70 YEARS SINCE HOLOCAUST AT YAD VASHEM

BY DAVID PARSONS

With the world now marking 70 years since the end of World War Two in Europe, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and Yad Vashem hosted a group of 25 Christian pastors and ministry leaders from around the world in April for a special week-long seminar on the Holocaust and combating anti-Semitism today.

Organised by Christian Friends of Yad Vashem in cooperation with the International School for Holocaust Studies, the conference was timed to coincide with Yom HaShoah – Israel’s annual Holocaust Remembrance Day – so participants could attend the official state ceremonies at Yad Vashem.

The conference also featured lectures by Holocaust scholars, moving encounters with survivors, and visits to biblical and historic sites in Israel. Participants were able to broaden their knowledge on the Nazi genocide, as well as the tragic legacy of Christian anti-Semitism.

REV. DEBBIE SLAYTON, assistant director of the Calvary Pentecostal Camp in Ashland, Virginia, has been to Israel over 30 times, including many visits to Yad Vashem, but this time was very different.

"I knew there was a Holocaust, but this has put a face to it", said Debbie. "It’s not just a group of people who became statistics, but these were individuals who had lives and who suffered so greatly, sometimes our minds just can’t fathom it."

"It’s pretty scary and very sad to learn more about the Christian role in the Nazi genocide. All of the courses have been very enlightening to me."

REV. JOHN HESSLER, senior pastor of a Calvary Chapel fellowship in Philadelphia, said he grew up around American Jews and always loved history, but he never really made the connection between the Holocaust and some of the Jewish families he knew.

"I now have a much greater sensitivity to the roots of anti-Semitism", he explained. "I think it’s essential that we never forget. There’s hatred and prejudice towards others all over the world, but as Christians we need to be especially sensitive to the hatred of Jews. Thanks to this seminar, I’ll be better equipped to deal with this in my ministry and my community."

TIMOTHY RABINEK from Warsaw, who represents a pro-Israel ministry in Eastern Europe, noted that, "the history of the Holocaust is the history of my own country. Over three million Polish Jews were murdered by the Nazis."

"I have been to Yad Vashem several times before, but to actually hear from professional teachers about the Holocaust is unforgettable", said Timothy. "For me, the most incredible thing is to be in this place and to be taught the idea that ‘Israel is alive!’ In Poland, we have the death camps and that’s about it. Most of the Jewish life has left Poland. But here there are Jews everywhere."

"I am still young, and to meet Holocaust survivors and to learn about my nation’s past, this is something I will cherish and use all my life", he added. "In Poland, it is popular to like the Jews today. But there is also a rejection of the historic reality that many Poles were involved in killing Jews back then. We need to face up to that."

Please support the vital work of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem.

MAKE YOUR DONATION TODAY AT:
http://www.icej.org/yadvashem
SEVENTY YEARS HAVE PASSED...
REFLECTING ON 1945 FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF 2015

BY DR. SUSANNA KOKKONEN, DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF YAD VASHEM

“I visited every nook and cranny... [I felt it my duty] to be in a position from then on to testify about these things in case there ever grew up at home the belief... that the stories of Nazi brutality were just propaganda.”

- US General Dwight D. Eisenhower, upon visiting the Buchenwald concentration camp in April 1945.

The year 2015 is a special time of commemoration. On January 27 we recalled the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, and in May we will commemorate the liberation of Europe, and indeed the world, from the Nazi war criminals.
May 1945 is forever etched in our minds as a time of great victory. But it also was a victory which, with finality, opened the gates of the Nazi concentration camps and extermination sites. A shocked world witnessed the horrors that had been perpetrated against the Jewish people.

Following these horrors, in the immediate post-war period, it was understood that anti-Semitism had led to this immense tragedy. As a logical consequence of this understanding, anti-Semitism became a taboo, something you would not openly confess to harbouring. It is therefore puzzling that today, 70 years later, anti-Semitism is clearly visible in the very nations that fought against it in 1945.

As an Israeli newscaster recently said, if the Holocaust was a vaccination against anti-Semitism, the vaccination is no longer strong enough. When seeing these developments, serious concerns arise over the insecurity of Jewish communities in nations around the world. There is, however, also a larger question of history and memory: Is it true that history repeats itself because we choose to forget? In this particular context, the very essence of human life is at stake because we either ignore or remember the ultimate evil – the Holocaust and genocide.

Following the mass destruction of World War II, the new United Nations arrived at a definition of genocide published in 1948 which in many ways derived straight from the Holocaust. The Shoah in its vastness had just occurred – an extreme case of genocide with the intention of murdering the entire Jewish population of Europe.

The UN declared: “Genocide is a denial of the right of existence of entire human groups, as homicide is the denial of the right to live of individual human beings; such denial of the right of existence shocks the conscience of mankind... and is contrary to moral law and to the spirit and aims of the United Nations.”

This statement defines the act of genocide but the act is only one part of it. Genocide is defined more specifically as the intent to annihilate a group based on their religion, race, national or ethnic identity. The definition goes further in stating that the intent to destroy the ability of a group to exist, or destroying their political and cultural leadership or their culture is the equivalent of genocide. Genocide is defined as a crime against humanity and thus it is contrary not only to the “spirit of the United Nations”, but to the human spirit of which we all are a part. Naturally to a Christian such a crime, clearly preceded by contempt for human life, is unthinkable.

Genocide, the carrying out of a deliberate campaign of mass murder, raises many difficult moral questions. Some of these questions will remain forever without answers. The murder of six million Jewish people is too large to comprehend but so are other post-Holocaust mass murders.

In the Nuremberg war crimes trials, the defendants were found guilty as follows: “They (the defendants) conducted deliberate and systematic genocide – viz., the extermination of racial and national groups – against the civilian populations of certain occupied territories in order to destroy particular races and classes of people, and national, racial or religious groups, particularly Jews, Poles, Gypsies and others.”

It is the intent, the deliberate character and the targeting of a specific group that sets genocide apart from other crimes.

It is assumed that learning about the Holocaust will help sensitise us to discrimination and hatred against targeted groups in our own time. The question is if we have indeed identified the issues we need to face? Do we face them as a community or as individuals? Let us consider the Holocaust and the extremely small number of Christian communities which acted as such against the Nazi persecution of Jews. Most of the rescuers of Jews were individuals. How effective is an individual response vis-à-vis genocidal ideologies? Our helplessness is evident in our individualised ineffective response to persecution and genocidal campaigns even now. We are not speaking up but rather are behaving like silent bystanders – just as the large majority of people did at the time of the Holocaust.

Looking around us, it is clear that anti-Semitism is rising again at an alarming rate and at the same time, as Christians we see our brethren persecuted in many places, most notably in the Middle East. While all of this is going on, many of us may feel that it is simply overwhelming. It is easier to be silent than to confront these issues. The problem is that silence is a choice. One of the clear universal lessons of the Holocaust is that silence will always help the perpetrator but never the victim of persecution. If this is true, then by being silent we are choosing to help the perpetrator. Clearly, that is not what we should be doing.

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial and Education Center in Jerusalem, has been engaged in Holocaust education for decades. While we do not seek to tell each visitor what they need to think, the lessons that arise from the Holocaust speak for themselves.

Since 2010, the Christian Desk at Yad Vashem has been offering Holocaust education specifically to pastors and Christian leaders. They become educational multipliers and ambassadors for the Holocaust and its universal lessons. We realise that we cannot go everywhere in person, so we need partners and friends to spread the message all over the world.

I would like to invite you to help us educate for the future. Remembrance is essential to God, and we need to combat the rising tide of evil, which goes against history and memory – even as Gen. Eisenhower predicted.
Over the course of last summer’s conflict with Hamas in Gaza, residents of southern Israel not only suffered through 54 days of incessant rocket barrages, but they also were confronted by a whole new type of threat dreamed up by their enemies – the “terror tunnel”.

During Operation Protective Edge, Israeli forces uncovered a vast maze of tunnels running under the Gaza border, with more than a dozen tunnels extending up to a mile or more into Israeli territory. Some had openings that came out right in the middle of Israeli communities in the western Negev. And plans were captured which indicated the tunnels were to be used to launch terror attacks on civilians during a major Jewish holiday.

This new reality has been a shock to those living in the Sha’ar HaNegev region. Many now are coping with the fear every day and every night that a terror tunnel is located directly underneath their home. It has been a source of great anxiety and stress not only for children in the area, but also many parents. The ones who need to be strong for their children are themselves experiencing panic.

As a result, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of families in the Negev seeking therapy treatments for anxiety and emotional distress – for both the children and the parents.

The ICEJ was one of the first charitable organisations to respond and offer help for this new source of trauma affecting those living close to the Gaza Strip. Just ask Varda Goldstein of the Resilience Center in Sha’ar HaNegev, which offers trauma therapy to affected residents.

“The phone call that we received from you in the first days of Operation Protective Edge was very moving and gave us the feeling that we are not alone”, she said recently, noting that the offer of help came even while the conflict was still raging.

“No one knows how this will really end”, added Goldstein. “We truly hope that the quiet will continue even as we organise ourselves for other possibilities. The knowledge that we are important to you strengthens us and gives us great hope for better days ahead.”

The Resilience Center works with local authorities to develop services and solutions for communities in the hardest-hit areas in times of conflict, while also aiding recovery and strengthening resolve when calm returns. The ICEJ is sponsoring treatments for individuals, families and communities to help ease their fears whenever a crisis arises.

ICEJ supporters in New Zealand and Canada were especially responsive to this need and donated funds to cover the costs for trauma treatments. The therapeutic teams being sponsored by the Christian Embassy are made up of clinical psychologists, social workers and art therapists, all qualified and experienced in trauma and post-trauma therapy.

Please consider making a contribution to ICEJ AID today, as we continue to reach out to the Israeli people at their point of need!

SO GIVE ON-LINE TODAY AT: www.icej.org/aid/icej-aid
During last summer’s conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, the ICEJ raised emergency funds from Christians around the world to provide nine portable bomb shelters for communities in the western Negev under constant threat from Kassam rocket strikes.

Currently, the situation in Israel is calm but there is always an underlying tension. Hamas is being quickly rearmed by Iran and has openly called on Hizbullah in Lebanon to join them in the next rocket war against Israel. Meanwhile, many Israeli families are still struggling with the traumas caused by four such rocket wars over the past nine years. And along the borders with Gaza and Lebanon, many residents live in daily fear of the terror tunnels being dug underneath their very homes.

In response, the ICEJ continues to provide mobile bomb shelters to communities in the most impacted areas. This includes five new shelters delivered so far in 2015, bringing to nearly 50 the total number of mobile bomb shelters we have delivered so far to vulnerable communities throughout Israel over the past decade.

When Kibbutz Sa’ad suffered a direct hit from a rocket strike last year, it left the local residents in shock. The entire school on the kibbutz is fortified, but the surrounding area had no shelters for children who happened to be outside the school compound. This included the school’s petting zoo, which has become a very important place for children on the kibbutz.

Many of the local children have been deeply impacted over the years by the numerous rocket barrages and constant terror threat on Kibbutz Sa’ad. So their concerned parents looked for a way to help them overcome the trauma and one of the best remedies has been animal therapy. Thus, opening a petting zoo beside the school has proven to be an invaluable addition to the community. Yet until recently, this therapy center risked being shut down because it did not have enough shelters. In fact, two boys playing in the petting zoo barely escaped harm when a rocket landed nearby last summer. Now, thanks to a bomb shelter
provided by the ICEJ, every corner of the large petting zoo and therapy center is now covered by bomb shelters, making it a much safer place for the children.

In nearby Kfar Aza, which borders the Gaza Strip, local residents also only have a matter of seconds to find shelter when the 'Code Red' alarm sounds. So the security needs are even much greater than most places in Israel. Even though every bus stop has been turned into a reinforced shelter, and every home is required to have a built-in safe room, the residents have still sought more protective measures for their families. That is how the idea was born to equip the community center with a new 50-ton bomb shelter capable of holding dozens of people. Donated by the Christian Embassy, the large shelter means that families in Kfar Aza can relax and enjoy their social activities more.

The ICEJ also delivered a portable bomb shelter recently to the community of Eshkol, placing it right outside the municipality offices where many people come every day to do business. Chaim Yelin, head of the Eshkol Regional Council, thanked the ICEJ in a letter for being such a great source of encouragement to Israelis living in the vulnerable southern part of the country.

“There is no doubt that we have once again learned and understood that in difficult times and in times of need we are surrounded with friends”, wrote Yelin. He added that the ICEJ was always ready to help without any hesitation and without expecting anything in return.

Your donation now to ICEJ AID can help us respond quickly in the next emergency situation in Israel, whether with more bomb shelters or other urgent relief efforts as the needs arise. Give today to our ISRAEL IN CRISIS fund so that we can be prepared for whatever this nation may face.

MAKE YOUR DONATION ON-LINE TODAY AT: www.icej.org/aid/israel_in_crisis
The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is currently funding several social projects in Israel to alleviate hunger and poverty, such as our food delivery van and grocery vouchers for poor families at Passover.

This spring, the ICEJ reached hundreds of needy families with our Passover gift baskets. The ICEJ AID team personally visited families and communities in the Jerusalem area, as well as the cities of Netanya, Beit Shean, Ashdod and Kiryat Gat, to deliver the Passover packages and our warmest holiday greetings.

One of the distributions was to Gilo, a neighbourhood in southern Jerusalem overlooking Bethlehem where 37,000 people now live, including approximately 1,000 families who are registered with the state welfare department as in need of help. We were warmly welcomed by a social worker at the Gilo community center and there were already people waiting in line for us, as we brought holiday blessings on behalf of our Christian supporters. The package of Passover essentials included, among other things, a large box of matza (unleavened bread), grape juice, a Haggadah book, and coupons for groceries.

The families we assisted were thrilled with the beautiful holiday packages, which had been carefully packed and wrapped by the ICEJ staff. Many said it helped make them feel respected and dignified.

In Kiryat Gat, the ICEJ delegation was welcomed once again this year to a little pre-Passover ceremony organised by the local Ethiopian Jewish community. The older men recited traditional blessings and later, Yudit Setz of ICEJ AID was asked to share a few words with the community. So it was a great joy for us as Christians to be a part of this important Jewish holiday once more here in the land of Israel!

Thank you for your faithful contributions to our annual Passover distribution project, and our many other initiatives to help fight poverty and hunger in Israel. Please support our efforts to feed and assist needy families beyond the holidays! Your gift can make a huge difference in someone’s life today!
The prophet Isaiah promises a time when all the nations will be coming up to Jerusalem to learn the ways of the Lord (Isaiah 2:1-4). While waiting for the complete and final fulfilment of this great vision, we at the Christian Embassy are going forth from Jerusalem to the nations at this time in hopes of reaching that glorious day. Recently, I travelled to Poland and then Argentina on ministry trips aimed at sharing God's great plans for Israel and through her to all the rest of the world.

Teaching ministry in Poland
At the end of March, I departed Jerusalem on a speaking tour with my wife Kati which took us to the southern part of Poland. Here, in the midst of beautiful mountains and ski resorts, our hosts Henryk and Alina Wieja from Life and Mission Ministry had organised a conference in the city of Wisla under the theme “Israel and the Church – A Shared Destiny!”

Two hundred participants came together representing different denominations and ministries, including many church leaders, to gain a deeper understanding of God's amazing plan of salvation and His enduring covenant promises to Abraham and his natural descendants. God’s purposes, revealed in the Old and the New Testament, are coherent and very precise in tying together the paths of Israel and the Church.

The opening address by Henryk Wieja introduced the foundational value of reconciliation between Jews and Christians, especially in the context of Jewish life on Polish soil for the past millennium.

The conference attendees then listened intently to my teachings on the relationship between Israel and the Church in the nations. I spoke of how God not only sees individuals, families and cities, but also nations as an entity.

All the nations are included in God’s salvation plan and followers of Jesus are to be found today in all the continents; but the nations will also be judged according to God’s standards of righteousness and sin.

Israel, on the other hand, has been carried back to their ancient homeland by God’s everlasting arms after two thousand years of exile, and will eventually be spiritually restored and saved as a nation. This will usher in the second coming of the Lord Jesus, who will then sit on the throne of His glory to judge between the ‘sheep and the goat nations’.

One of the main measuring sticks in this judgment will be how the nations have related to the city of Jerusalem, the physical land of...
Juha Ketola speaking at the Life and Mission Church pastored by Henryk and Alina Wieja.

The conference in Wisła, Poland on ‘Israel and the Church – A Shared Destiny!’

Juha Ketola delivers a gift box of fresh Israeli dates to new ICEJ-Argentina national directors Hernan and Claudia Acosta in Buenos Aires.

Israel and the Jewish people (Zechariah 12; Joel 3; Matthew 25).

The attendees of the conference were encouraged to ask God some important questions about their own lives: “God, what is it that you are doing today? How can I be a part of that? Open my eyes, so I can understand.”

The ICEJ is thrilled with the opening which this conference provided for our ministry in Poland.

New branch in Argentina
In early April, I flew to Buenos Aires to inaugurate our latest national branch of ICEJ-Argentina. This took place during a prophetic conference called “Transformation”, which was hosted by Hernan and Claudia Acosta in Moreno, near Buenos Aires.

Hernan Acosta has a strong apostolic and prophetic ministry, and leads and discipiles a large group of pastors and ministers mainly in Argentina but also in neighbouring Uruguay. On the last day of this wonderful and powerful conference, we held the inaugural ceremony to set apart Hernan and his wife for service as the national directors of ICEJ-Argentina. With much joy and honour, he was recognised before the Lord and the people, and all the conference delegates (about 800 people in total) rejoiced greatly for this new connection between Israel and Argentina.

One of the most inspiring aspects of this gathering to see and experience was the enormous and unquenchable hunger and thirst among the Argentinian believers for the Lord and His Spirit. Meetings from morning until midnight every day were not enough for them – the people still wanted more as they lingered in His presence at the end of each night!

I had the privilege to preach a series of messages at the conference on God’s salvation plan for the whole world through Israel, the Abrahamic covenant, and God’s promise to restore all things. I ministered together with very influential leaders and ministers, such as Apostle Dr. Efrain Avelar from Guatemala, Pastor Marco Barrientos from Dallas, Texas, and Dionny Baez from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Dionny Baez carries an exceptionally strong prophetic anointing, and also a lot of healings and other miracles occurred while he was ministering!

During my trip to Argentina, I also met with Dr. Christian Hooft, Vice President of ACIERA, a large alliance of Evangelical churches in Argentina, as well as the National Council of Pastors, who represent 15,000 Churches from different denominations in Argentina. Again, the ministry and vision of the ICEJ was well received by these greatly respected church leaders.

Meetings from morning until midnight every day were not enough for them – the people still wanted more as they lingered in His presence at the end of each night!
ICEJ-NORWAY CO-HOSTS OSLO SYMPOSIUM

In March the ICEJ-Norway branch co-sponsored the fourth biannual Oslo Symposium, a major policy conference held every second year to address domestic and foreign policy issues ahead of upcoming national elections. One session always focuses specifically on the Norwegian government’s approach to Israel and the Middle East, giving Evangelical Christians a chance to express their support for Israel to the country’s political leaders and national media. This year, ICEJ-Norway national director Dag Øyvind Juliussen presided over the Middle East session, which featured presentations by ICEJ media director David Parsons from Jerusalem and international law expert Jacques Gauthier of Canada.

Parsons gave a strong defence of Israeli democracy, which he described as unique and vibrant in many respects, including the unique way in which the Israeli people deliberately chose to be a Western democracy at the nation’s rebirth in 1948, rather than fall into the orbit of Soviet communism. Speaking on the day after the recent Israeli elections, Parsons also noted that the chairman of the elections commission which ruled on the fairness of the voting was an Israeli Arab judge who qualified for this important post even though he refused as a youth to serve in the army and still refuses to sing the national anthem Hatikvah. Meantime, Gauthier traced the legality of Israel’s claim to Jerusalem under international law.

The conference was held in the congress center in downtown Oslo and was marked for the first time by a heavily-armed police presence all around the building, a sign of the growing threat from anti-Semitic and anti-Israel activists across Europe.

GEORGIA BLESSED BY ISRAEL MESSAGE

In March, the new ICEJ branch in Georgia hosted its first conference in the capital city of Tbilisi, under the theme of "Israel and the Church". In preparation for the event, the local ICEJ team compiled and printed many articles and brochures about Israel and the Jewish roots of Christianity, which were also used in the branch’s new magazine and website. This marked the first time many of these important biblical teachings on Israel and the Jewish people were translated into the Georgian language, according to Oleg Khubashvili, national director of ICEJ-Georgia and Bishop of the Pentecostal Union in Georgia.

"Many denominational leaders and even ordinary believers have a lot of interest and hunger in knowing more about the relationship between the Church and Israel", said Bishop Khubashvili. This was reflected in the excellent attendance of over 500 Christians at the conference. Popular violinist Serguei Popov was invited to add a special touch to the worship and musical program, while the featured speaker was Rev. Michael Utterback, a former ICEJ international director who is still involved in ministry and aliyah work in Jerusalem. His teachings had a great impact in laying out God’s intended destiny for both Israel and the Church.

"This conference made a big difference in the spiritual life of the Evangelical churches in Georgia and we know that it will bring blessings to whole country", said Popov, who was a key figure in launching the ICEJ-Georgia branch last year.

Michael Utterback (r) and Bishop Khubashvili at the first ICEJ-Georgia national conference.

David Parsons speaking on Israeli democracy at the Oslo Symposium.
ISRAELI, JEWISH LEADERS THANK ICEJ-UK, IRELAND FOR SUPPORT

The United Kingdom and Ireland have become a heated battleground in the campaign to delegitimise and sanction Israel, but the ICEJ branches in Britain and Ireland have answered the challenge in a way that is bringing much encouragement to the embattled Jewish communities there, as well as garnering the attention of Israel’s president and prime minister.

Recently, the ICEJ-UK branch joined other British Christians in circulating a declaration which expressed appreciation for Israel as a safe haven for Middle East Christians, as well as voicing support for stronger British ties to the Jewish state and stressing the need to combat anti-Semitism. Called the “Shalom Declaration”, the document was presented at the ICEJ-UK branch’s recent annual conferences, as well as at a special Night to Celebrate Israel in Manchester also attended by Israeli officials and Jewish community leaders.

ICEJ-UK national director Rev. David Elms reports that not only were British Jewish leaders buoyed by the show of support, he even received a letter of thanks from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in recognition of their efforts. His letter stated: “I thank the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem – United Kingdom for its dedication and commitment to Israel. Your steadfast support is a source of strength and encouragement.”

Meanwhile, the ICEJ-Ireland branch also received a letter of gratitude from Israeli President Reuven Rivlin in response to a recent solidarity rally it held in Belfast. The event drew over 600 Christians, and was addressed by an Israeli diplomat from the local Embassy and the Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

In his letter personally addressed to ICEJ-Ireland national director Brian Silvester, President Rivlin stated: “I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to you for your steadfast support of the State of Israel... You, your wife Ann, and ICEJ-Ireland represent the unity and moral clarity that is indispensable to our country and our future. The State of Israel is stronger because of your support.”

CELEBRATING PASSOVER IN THE SWISS ALPS

In April, the ICEJ-Switzerland branch hosted a ministry tour for ICEJ international speaker Doron Schneider of our Jerusalem staff which was highlighted by a special Passover celebration presided over by Doron and his 11-year old son, Oz Schneider. More than 130 Swiss Christians took part in the Pessach seder service in the town of Thalgut, which Doron and his son conducted in German and Hebrew. Doron taught about the rich symbolism and foreshadows of the Messiah in the original Passover story and how they found fulfilment in Jesus at Passover many centuries later. Meanwhile, Oz sang in Hebrew several songs from the traditional Haggadah book retelling the Exodus story. The next day, the church was again packed for a meeting in which Doron spoke about Jesus fulfilling all the other Jewish festivals, according to Colossians 2:16-17. The Schneiders’ ministry tour to the Swiss Alps also included church meetings in Oensingen and Luzern.
Paying Tribute to Israel's Christian Friends!

New 'Friends of Zion' Heritage Center opens in Jerusalem

By David Parsons

In April, a new museum opened in Jerusalem dedicated to honouring some of Israel's greatest Christian friends in recent centuries. The Friends of Zion Heritage Center is home to a state-of-art multimedia exhibit which pays tribute to those Christians who made major contributions to the modern-day restoration of the Jewish state back in their ancient homeland.

The interactive displays tell the story of the many Christians who supported the Zionist movement, from prominent political figures to courageous military commanders, from impassioned preachers to those humble Christians who rescued Jews in the Holocaust. Many were respected leaders of their day, while others were unheralded heroes forgotten by history - until now.

"The idea for this museum begins with Corrie ten Boom", said its founder Dr. Michael D. Evans, a best-selling author and head of the Jerusalem Prayer Team. "When I first met her in 1972, she told me her dream was that their family home in Haarlem [in Holland] would be opened as a testimony of God's love. And it was!"

Evans explained that after Corrie passed away, he purchased her family's house and watch shop, and has kept them open as a museum which receives 600,000 visitors per year. He has since met many of the 800 Jews who were hidden there by the ten Boom family during the Holocaust and survived, and their stories were very touching. "The ten Booms died so I could live", one Jewish lady told him.

"So I decided to bring Corrie to Jerusalem", Evans continued. "Many Israelis do not know her amazing story. They know about Anne Frank from Holland, but not the ten Booms. And even the younger Christian generations do not know about her."

"As I prayed about how to bring her story to Jerusalem, I finally realised there were many stories of Christian rescuers during the Holocaust. And as I researched this, I found there were people from Japan, from across Europe, from South America, and from all over the world with stories just as amazing as Corrie ten Boom."

This led to a broadening of the museum's scope to include stories of Christians from recent generations who made significant contributions to Israel's re-birth.

"I wanted a place where Christians could celebrate their heroes and their history, and for Israelis to learn about it too", said Evans.

To do this, he hired some of Israel's top hi-tech wizards at animation and videography, to create a lively, colourful and innovative audio-visual experience. They have incorporated
new techniques in roto-scoping and video-mapping that are unique not only to Israel but also globally.

The tour begins with the biblical promises to Abraham in Genesis 12, and an introduction by former Israeli president Shimon Peres, who recently signed on as international chairman of the museum board.

“Shimon Peres wanted to be a part of this effort because he knows the key role which Christians played in the founding of Israel, that it would not have happened without them”, according to Evans. “And he likes the idea of a ‘Friends of Zion’ Heritage Center. He just wrote me that: 'It takes a lot more energy to make enemies than friends, and I want to be a part of this’.”

In this new role, Peres recently travelled to Texas to present former US president George W. Bush with the museum’s first annual Friends of Zion Award for his behind-the-scenes assistance in Israel’s bombing of the Syrian nuclear reactor in 2007.

Evans offered that he considers Bush, as an Evangelical who stood firmly with Israel, to be a Christian Zionist hero along with many of those featured in the museum. This would include displays paying tribute to President Harry S. Truman, Rev. William Hechler, Rev. William Blackstone, Lords Shaftesbury and Balfour, and Maj. Gen. Orde Charles Wingate, among many, many more. There is even a feature on a Prof. George Bush of New York University, a distant relative of the Bush family, who wrote a book in the 1840s predicting the literal return of the Jews to their homeland.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also gives a presentation on how his own father was befriended by Lt. Col. John Henry Patterson, British commander of the Zion Mule Corps during World War One - the first organised Jewish fighting force in nearly 2000 years.

The standard one-hour tour takes one through a timeline of Israel's ancient and modern history, and focuses on telling the stories of key non-Jewish friends and their invaluable contributions in protecting the Jewish people and re-establishing the nation of Israel.

Evans is pleased with the early results, especially from the hundreds of Israelis who have already visited the museum. With luminaries like Shimon Peres and Benjamin Netanyahu on board, he is hoping that groups of Israeli school children and IDF soldiers will soon be packing the museum to learn more about their nation’s genuine Christian friends - including the amazing story of Corrie Ten Boom.

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