LIFE ON THE GOLAN

BY DAVID PARSONS
Dear friends,

Israel has voted and a new government is being formed. Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu got an overwhelming vote of confidence from Israel’s electorate which makes him the longest serving Prime Minister in the history of Israel. It seems that the nation affirmed his strong path on economy and security. Under his leadership, Israel has forged unprecedented alliances with foreign nations including Arab nations that used to be hostile to Israel.

There are two things the Bible tells us about governments. First the Bible teaches us that governments and its leaders are appointed by God. The prophet Daniel declares: “He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings…” (Dan 2:21). The New Testament church also holds this worldview. Paul writes: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God…” (Rom 13:1). This is not only true for Israel but for any government in the world. Paul was writing these lines not to a democratically elected liberal government but to the church in Rome that was under the rule of an often-oppressive regime.

Secondly, the Bible instructs us to pray for our leaders. It asks us to bring “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving… for kings and all who are in high positions…” (1Tim 2:1-2).

Therefore, wherever you read this, I ask you to do just that. Thank God for the newly elected government in Israel. Pray that God will use them to further his purposes in Israel. Pray that they will know “what makes for peace” for Israel and all its inhabitators. Pray that under the new government the local body of Christ can fulfill its calling. Pray that God will give wisdom and knowledge to Prime Minister Netanyahu to lead the nation of Israel in the midst of all its challenges. Pray that God will protect him and his family in these turbulent times.

I also encourage you to pray in the same way for your own government wherever you live. As we do so, the Bible promises us two things. If we pray for our leaders, “... we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” And secondly “it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all the people to be saved” (1 Tim 2:2-3). Praying for our government touches the heart of God in a special way.

Finally, remember that “the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jam 5:16). With this I also ask you to pray for us: for the different activities you read in this magazine, for our leaders around the world, and for us in Jerusalem.

Thank you for your support and for standing with us,

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Dr Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ President

COVER PHOTO: The Banias Waterfall on the ascent to the Golan Heights

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I will never forget a visit I made several years ago with a group of home church leaders in Whenchou, a city of ten million people in China. These pastors represented some one million local believers, I was told. What a privilege this was, especially when they said I was the first person to come to them from Israel. I started explaining why Israel is important to us and quickly found out this was nothing new to them. After the service I asked the leader: “Who taught you about Israel?” I still remember the puzzled look on his face. “It’s all in the Bible”, he replied.

This begs the question: What happened in the Church for it to move so far away from this simple truth to becoming the primary force for antisemitism over the past 1500 years. Hateful preaching of contempt against the Jews, pogroms, forced conversions, Inquisitions and finally the Holocaust – all made Christianity the archenemy of the Jews, even more so than Islam.

Paul’s Doctrine on Israel
This is even more startling when the Apostle Paul could not have been more clear in his teaching about Israel, to whom “pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.” (Romans 9:4-5)

Paul recognised that while most Jews had failed to accept Yeshua as their Messiah, they nevertheless remain “beloved for the sake of the fathers” (Romans 11:28). Paul saw their rejection of Jesus as a temporary state which the Hebrew prophets foretold (for example, Isaiah 6); yet he also believed eventually the time would come when “... all Israel will be saved, ...” (Romans 11:26). He thus admonished Gentile believers not to be arrogant against the Jews (Romans 11:18) and to consider their own origins: “... remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). Yet now by grace they have been brought near and share in God’s promises.

Developing Cracks
The answer of why and where the Church parted ways with Israel is complex and cannot be fully covered just in this short article. In part we can blame Roman policy for it, but far more importantly we should hold the Church itself responsible for the decisions its leaders took in councils and synods in the early centuries after Christ.

Even before the first ecumenical councils, the Church already started drifting away from Israel and its Hebraic, biblical roots. After the very first Church council recorded in the Book of Acts, chapter 15, things started changing. First, the demographics of the Church steadily changed. While it started out in Jerusalem as a 100% Jewish church, within a century or so Gentiles became the majority. Jerusalem remained the spiritual center of the faith, but the Roman wars dramatically changed the Church’s connection to Jerusalem and Israel. In 70 AD, Titus destroyed the Temple, and a few decades later Hadrian expelled virtually all Jews from Jerusalem and

The Council of Nicea in 325 AD took place in a city whose ruins can still be found in Iznik, in northwest Turkey.
the Land of Israel. The early Church’s unique spiritual connection to the Land and the Jewish people was significantly weakened. A further blow came in 136 AD when Marcus became the first non-Jewish bishop of Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the spiritual center of gravity began gradually moving towards Rome and Constantinople.

**Nicea and the Jews**
The final blow, however, took place in 325 AD in Nicea, a city whose ruins can still be found in Iznik, in northwest Turkey. This became the place of arguably the most impactful council in Church history.

The Nicean Council was significant for many reasons. It was the first council to take place when the Christians were no longer a persecuted minority. Rather, Constantine had embraced Christianity as the official religion for the entire empire. And it was the emperor, and not the clergy, who convened this council to consolidate the Church as a unified force within his realm.

**BEGINNING AT NICEA AND CONTINUING AT THE COUNCILS AND SYNODS THAT FOLLOWED, THE LARGELY GENTILE CHURCH BEGAN SEPARATING FROM ITS JEWISH ORIGINS. THIS SHIFT OCCURRED IN THREE MAIN AREAS:**

**FIRST, A CHANGE IN CALENDAR AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS;**

**SECOND, A CHANGE IN CHURCH ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE JEWS;**

**AND THIRD, STRICT RULES AGAINST CHRISTIANS ENGAGING WITH JEWS.**
The main focus of the Nicean Council dealt with the nature of Jesus as both human and divine. On this point the early Church was riven with controversy. After lengthy and heated discussions, they finally reached a consensus on the ‘Jesus question’. For most participants, questions related to ‘Jewish’ matters were of secondary importance.

Yet beginning at Nicea and continuing at the councils and synods that followed, the largely gentile Church began separating from its Jewish origins. This shift occurred in three main areas: First, a change in calendar and religious holidays; second, a change in Church attitude towards the Jews; and third, strict rules against Christians engaging with Jews.

**A Change in Holy Days**

Until the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, the churches were divided on how to celebrate Easter (Passover), and Sunday was never considered a holy day. The church in Rome and other Western regions decided to tie the observance of Easter to the biblical accounts of Christ being resurrected on the first day of the week, while going by the Julian calendar rather than the Hebrew. Any link to the biblical feast of Passover was ignored. The churches of the East, however, maintained the tradition of affixing the Passion week to Passover, which kept them more in line to the Old Testament and the traditions of Jesus and his disciples.

But at Nicea, Constantine demanded a unified Christian calendar for his empire. In a synodal letter to all churches, the Council wrote: “We declare good news to you! ... As of now we do not anymore celebrate Easter according to the tradition of the Jews!”

And the emperor himself wrote to the churches in the East: “It was declared to be particularly unworthy, for, the holiest of all festivals (Easter), to follow the custom of the Jews, who had soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes, and whose minds were blinded.”

Known for his hostility towards the Jews, Constantine continued: “We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, ... [but] to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews, for it is truly shameful for us to hear them boast that without their direction we could not keep this feast.”

“At the same time” he added “it is our duty not to have anything in common with the murderers of our Lord.”

His reasoning was twofold: first, since the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus, they must also be wrong in their traditions; and second, most Christians at the time simply did not follow the Jewish calendar. Thus, it was a decision based on a democratic consensus which lacked any theological basis.

Constantine’s radical approach totally ignored the multiple parallels of the last days of Jesus Christ to the biblical Passover feast. Jesus instructed his disciples to prepare a Passover meal (Luke 22:7-8) and declared “with fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer...” (Luke 22:15). He kept it in many ways like Jews do until today; Jesus took the cup after the meal and blessed it. (1 Corinthians 11:25). To this day, Jews consider this third cup to be the ‘cup of messianic redemption’. Then after the ‘Hallel’, the traditional reading of Psalms 113-118, he went to the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26:30). Paul also declares that Jesus is our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). But all this was ignored.

In the same manner, a new weekly holiday was established – Sunday. Until then, Sunday was not kept at all, save for some Christians who held a time of prayers and scripture readings on Sunday mornings before going to work, remembering that the Lord was risen on the first day of the week. But Constantine’s aim was to separate the Church completely from any Jewish customs. So to keep Christians from observing Shabbat, he invented the new holy day of Sunday. A number of Christians struggled to agree. But the follow-up Synod of Laodicea settled the matter. Christians who still kept the Jewish Sabbath were to be basically excommunicated.

**A Change in Attitude**

Paul’s love for his people was immense. He offered, if possible, to be accursed from Christ to save some of his Jewish brethren (Romans 9:3). But these later Church councils were totally devoid of the Apostles’ passionate love for the Jewish people. Anything Jewish was unwelcome, including Jews themselves. Instead of Paul’s gospel being “to the Jews first”, the new attitude was to make it as difficult as possible for Jews to join the Church. Only if they “pronounced faith according to Nicean doctrine”, could they become members. Jews who kept Shabbat were refused baptism.

At Nicea, the bishops also asked Jewish converts to give up their Jewish names and adopt Christian ones. This completely ignored the fact that the Apostles all had Jewish names and that Mary called Jesus by the name Yeshua, Hebrew for “saviour”, rather than the Greek parallel of Iesous. And his mother was not really ‘Mary’ but the Jewish name Miriyam.

For the New Testament apostles, the world consisted of ‘the household of Israel’ and of Gentiles. Only by the grace of God could Gentiles be grafted into the natural olive tree of God’s covenant people Israel. Paul considered his Jewish ancestry as a privilege (Romans 3:1; Galatians 2:15) - though not a privilege that would save him. But for the Nicean church this biblical worldview was reversed. Paul’s question, “what advantage has the Jew” was no longer answered “much in every way”, but the opposite, only with vicious hatred. Instead of Jews being “beloved for the sake of the fathers” (Romans 11:28), they were now the “murderers of Christ”. In various council records, the list of the damned included “heretics, Heathens and Jews”. In the eyes of the gentile Church, they were all the same. In Paul’s world, it was Gentiles who were without God and without hope.
(Ephesians 2:12), but now this applied to the Jewish people – a doctrine that ran contrary to all the New Testament taught.

Rules of Engagement
All this led to strict laws which forbade any positive engagement with Jews. Nicea and subsequent Church councils taught that Christians should have nothing to do with Jews. Leaders who visited and prayed in synagogues were to be removed from office, and ordinary Christians who did so should be “put off”. The synod of Laodicea forbade any participation in their feasts, nor were Christians to take their unleavened bread during Passover. You could not even allow a Jewish physician to treat your illness, one synod ruled. Celebrating Jewish feasts and keeping Shabbat, according to the bishops, was like “mocking Christ”.

Nicea’s Impact on Church History
All these new approaches not only created a rift between the Church and the Jews, but it also set the Church on a path which eventually led to the atrocities of the Crusades, where the killing of Jews was considered pleasing to God. It later paved the way to the Inquisition and eventually the Holocaust, when Hitler could quote the German reformer Luther to justify his hatred of the Jews.

What was even more tragic about Nicea is that it was only the second universal council of the Church. Whereas in Acts 15, the Jewish church went beyond their traditions and feelings to welcome and embrace Gentile believers, the Gentile church at Nicea shamelessly rejected the Jews from all church life and generated hatred towards them for generations to come. Only a few Christian movements – such as the Waldensian revivalists in Italy and the Puritans in England – ever dared to challenge this hostile attitude towards the Jews.

A Modern-Day Miracle
With the rebirth of the nation of Israel and the emergence of a new stream of Christianity known as Evangelicalism, we have finally started to witness a sea-change in Church-Israel relations since the second half of the past century. While the historic churches are still struggling with their antisemitic attitudes, much has changed due to the ever-expanding Evangelical movement.

The rift between Jews and Christians seems to be healing perhaps faster than many expected. After such a horrible history between us, it is nothing short of a miracle to hear Israel’s prime minister refer to evangelical Christians as “Israel’s best friends”. Many Jewish organisations today have a “Christian friends” department, including the previously unthinkable Christian Friends of Yad Vashem, a revered institution which commemorates the darkest chapter of Jewish-Christian relations – the Holocaust. This required moving beyond many historic obstacles and deep emotional wounds, but even Yad Vashem has opened its doors to Christians.

On the Christian side, much has changed as well. Many Christians today take it for granted to participate in a Passover Seder meal, to visit their local synagogue or even to help rebuild historic synagogues. Christians from around the world support countless projects not only in Israel but also in many Jewish communities in their own countries. Most amazing to me is the fact that Chinese Christians today adopt biblical, Jewish names. Remember that Nicea called for converted Jews to adopt Christian names, yet now the opposite is happening. And every year thousands of Christians visit Messianic fellowships in Israel to experience and learn from their ancient biblical traditions.

It is indeed a new prophetic season for both Israel and the Church. At the ICEJ, we are privileged and blessed to be part of healing the historic rift between us and paving the way for reconciliation in these last days. We live in truly exciting times.

This year’s Feast of Tabernacles theme is “Beginnings”. Many speakers will give a fresh perspective on how God is taking the Church back to its beginnings – in a Jewish Jerusalem. Join us in the rebuilt city of Jerusalem and find out how together we can play a role in the divine restoration of Israel even as the Church reconnected with its roots in Israel.

Finally, please prayerfully consider what you can contribute towards our efforts to heal the rift between Israel and Christianity, which has been such a stain on the Church for so long. This is your opportunity to make a difference in Church history!

Source materials on the Nicea Council available upon request at media@icej.org
The United Nations has a long record of abusing Israel, and this happened again recently when the UN Human Rights Council passed five resolutions condemning the Jewish state on various trumped-up charges. Yet there are positive signs that key Western democracies are starting to challenge this deplorable UN fixation with Israel, and the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is reaching out to them to encourage this shift in attitude towards Israel.

In March, the UNHRC vilified Israel for daring to defend its citizens from violence and terror. It also wrongly described as “peaceful” the Gaza border protests of the past year. Emboldened by the friendly message coming from Geneva, Hamas immediately stepped up the violent protests and launched rockets deeper into Israel.

It has become far too easy for the Palestinians to manipulate UN forums to go along with their agenda, which aims to deny Israel its right of self-defence and ultimately its right to exist. Yet thankfully, some moral, sane countries are waking up to this twisted reality, and decided not to support any resolutions submitted under Agenda Item 7, the UNHRC’s annual session which permanently singles out Israel for abuse. They realise this undermines the cause of peace and the credibility of the UN.

The next big test at the UNHRC will be over its plans to publish a blacklist of companies doing business in Israeli settlements. The HRC was founded to deal with human rights violations by sovereign states, so this would mark the first time it has sought to sanction private actors. By singling out Israel, it is also violating its mandate to protect human rights on a universal basis “for all people”.

In response, the Christian Embassy has written to the heads of the UNHRC and also activated our national branches in key member states of the Council to press for a halt to this UN blacklisting effort. We are approaching officials in Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Fiji, Hungary, Italy, Philippines, Slovakia, South Africa and Ukraine. We are hopeful these democratic nations will persuade the Human Rights Council to abandon this misguided anti-Israel initiative.
It was vintage ‘Bibi’. For the third time in his record five election victories, Israelis went to bed thinking Benjamin Netanyahu was vanquished only to awaken the next morning and discover he was their prime minister.

It first happened in 1996, when Netanyahu trailed in the late night returns before narrowly eclipsing Shimon Peres by 30,000 votes come morning. Again in 2015, the evening exit polls had the National Union edging Likud before the next day’s official tally showed Netanyahu handily winning by six Knesset seats. Even in 2009, when Kadima bested Likud by one seat, Netanyahu still managed to outflank Tzipi Livni and retain the premiership.

Yet Netanyahu managed to shock the nation and the world by scoring what looks to be an historic fifth term in the Prime Minister’s Office. He must still forge a coalition government with majority support in the new Knesset. But with this triumph, Netanyahu has achieved legendary status as modern Israel’s most victorious and longest-serving premier – surpassing David Ben-Gurion’s four victories and 13 years in office.

The close results, with the two central parties splitting the lion’s share of ballots, indicates the campaign indeed boiled down to a referendum on Netanyahu. The three IDF generals, led by Benny Gantz, united with Yair Lapid’s faction to form the upstart Blue & White list, whose sole agenda was to send Bibi packing. The new alignment did not assail his economic or security policies, and they even acknowledged his competency in running the country and handling foreign affairs. Rather, they denounced his “divisiveness” and his sense of entitlement after holding onto power for so long.

Netanyahu did upset many Israelis, and many American Jews as well, by repeatedly bowing to the ultra-Orthodox parties on Western Wall prayers and Haredi draft exemptions. He also drew complaints for legitimising the anti-Arab Kahanists on the far-Right.

Certainly, no other aspiring Israeli leader at present could pull off such diplomatic feats. Thus, in the waning days of the campaign Netanyahu and his Likud party picked up crucial extra votes at the expense of other factions to his right. Even so, Netanyahu and his “natural partners” in the Right bloc will hold 65 seats in the new Knesset, giving him the clearest path to head the government. But each will try to exact a price for their loyalty.

For example, he will need support from Avigdor Lieberman of Yisrael Beiteinu, who bolted the last government due to Netanyahu’s perceived weakness towards Hamas in Gaza. Lieberman and his secular Russian immigrant party also do not relish sitting in a coalition with the religious factions Shas and United Torah Judaism.

Netanyahu also must rely on the staunchly pro-settlement Union of Right-Wing Parties, which could insist that he keep his promise, made in desperation late in the campaign, to annex parts of Judea/Samaria. Yet such a move could undermine the long-awaited Trump peace plan and Israel’s overall relations with a very friendly US president.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu must fend off the expected indictments for bribery and fraud now hanging over his head. The parties on the Right are reportedly prepared to stand by him as prime minister until he is actually convicted of a crime. But another alternative could eventually present itself by way of a national unity government with Blue & White, if they are willing to protect him from removal from office so long as he is pursuing a viable US-led peace process with the Palestinians.

So the 2019 elections may be over, but uncertainties abound as the legendary career of Bibi Netanyahu continues.
Israelis were thrilled when US President Donald Trump recently recognised the Golan Heights as part of Israel. Some called it a surprise “gift” for Purim. But it would be amiss to claim Trump just “gave” the Golan to Israel, since God already did that long ago. Besides, Israel has been in possession of the Golan fair-and-square for decades and will never surrender its grip.

Now most world powers insist Israel has illegally “occupied” the Golan since capturing the area from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War. This makes it sound like it was always Syrian territory.

In fact, the Golan is part of the land God promised to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-21 and elsewhere in Scripture. Also known by its biblical name “Bashan”, it was conquered by the Israelites under Moses and Joshua some 3500 years ago and allotted to the tribe of Manasseh. There is ample evidence of a continuing Jewish presence there over the ensuing centuries.

In modern times, Britain and France wrestled over the Golan when dividing the vacated Ottoman territories after World War I. An elevated plateau, it was valued more at that time for its water resources, and eventually got included in France’s mandate for Syria. This despite the fact that Jewish benefactors – mainly through the Jewish National Fund – had already purchased large tracts on the Golan to settle Jews there, since they considered it part of biblical Israel.

But Syria wound up with the Golan and turned it into one massive military base, brimming with bunkers, trenches and artillery positions all facing down on northern Israel. From these fortified positions, Syrian gunners routinely made target practice of Jewish farms and villages below. Tensions escalated further in 1964 when the Syrians dug channels on the Golan to divert the headwaters of the Jordan River, a move which some historians say helped spark the 1967 conflict.

In the Six-Day War, Israel indeed captured the Golan from Syria. But only after Egypt and Syria unified forces, blockaded the Straits of Tiran, kicked UN observers out of Sinai, amassed troops along their borders with Israel, and threatened a war of extermination. Israeli leader Levi Eshkol spent several tense weeks exhausting all avenues of diplomacy to avert war, before ordering a pre-emptive strike. Thus, Israel has every right and reason to contend they took the Golan in a legitimate act of self-defence.

After gallantly holding onto the Golan in the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, Israel has transformed it into a peaceful, prosperous agricultural region and popular tourist destination. Israelis – left and right – are proud of what they have made of the Golan, with its vineyards, wineries, fruit orchards, dairy farms, horse ranches and wind turbines. Israelis flock to its log cabins and the Hermon ski resort. They repel and hang glide off its cliffs, hike its scenic trails, and relax in its warm springs.

Most Israelis also know the Golan has immense strategic value due to its commanding terrain, and this advantage should never be surrendered voluntarily. What if Syria were still ensconced on the Golan over the past eight years of the Syrian civil war? No doubt Assad’s troops, rebel forces, ISIS jihadists and Hezbollah units would all have relished the chance to fire away at Israel from its lofty heights. It also would have seriously compromised the IDF’s ability to strike Iranian positions inside Syria.

Israelis also know that, unlike the West Bank, there are no masses of Arab refugees clamouring to return to their homes on the Golan, because the Assad regime never allowed them to live there in the first place.

So whether one approves of Trump’s decision or not, Israelis agree that the Golan always has and always will belong to them.
During his first term in the premiership in 2009, Benjamin Netanyahu in foreign relations worked in Israel’s thriving hi-tech industry. From Tel Aviv University, for ten years, she received her BA in Psychology and Sociology from the University of Haifa and her MBA from Tel Aviv University. For ten years, she served as a key contact with government officials and leaders in the Jewish Diaspora from around the globe.

Ms. Granitza now comes into her new position with 15 years of valuable experience in building support for Yad Vashem and explaining its important mission to a variety of audiences. As Deputy Director of the International Relations Division, she was involved in every aspect of the events and visits of Yad Vashem’s supporters from around the world, including many Christian leaders throughout the years. She also frequently presented lectures on the Holocaust in both Hebrew and English, including on behalf of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem at prestigious events, such as the National Religious Broadcasters convention in the US. Ms. Granitza was also responsible for planning and executing Yad Vashem’s International Missions to Europe and Israel, hosting donors of all faiths, backgrounds and nationalities.

Having lost family members in the Holocaust, Ms. Granitza takes her job very seriously. As an ambassador for Yad Vashem to the Christian world, she will continue to promote Holocaust education as an important means for ensuring that the atrocities of the Shoah never happen again.

Founded in 1953 by an act of Israel’s parliament, Yad Vashem was entrusted with the mission of safeguarding the memory of Jewish victims of the Holocaust and imparting its meaning to future generations. Christian Friends of Yad Vashem was established in October 2006 in cooperation with the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem to raise awareness about the Holocaust and its universal lessons within the Christian world. Today, CFYV is active in many countries worldwide and works with a variety of denominations and Christian ministries to build bridges between Jews and Christians.

For more information or to support the work of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem, please go to: https://intl.icej.org/yadvashem

Also feel free to write the Christian Desk at: christian_friends@yadvashem.org.il

The ICEJ’s former executive director, Malcolm Hedding, was one of the key initiators behind the establishment of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem. He will be participating as a speaker at the upcoming Christian Leadership Seminar in early May. He recently shared with the World From Jerusalem a preview of the message he will convey to this year’s participants.

Over the years I have encountered many Holocaust Survivors and these encounters have profoundly impacted my life and ministry. I will be sharing these at the upcoming Christian Leadership Seminar at Yad Vashem and in such a way that we rededicate ourselves to telling the story of the Shoah accurately and powerfully. This is most urgent and important because many of the Survivors are now sadly leaving us and the truth about what happened to them must live on in order to ensure that the Shoah never happens again.

The Christian Desk at Yad Vashem was founded in order to harness and give expression to the love and support that a new generation of Christian Evangelicals have for Israel and the Jewish people. The shadow of the Holocaust still hangs over the Christian world because the underpinnings of this evil endeavour were Christian. This has to be recognised, repented of and confronted by those Christians interested in learning the truth and equipping themselves in a manner that they can rekindle genuine remembrance in a redemptive way. Forgetfulness will lead to oblivion and good of our children and for the well-being of Israel. Herein lies the importance of Christian Friends of Yad Vashem.
HOLY SPIRIT, REVELATION & REVOLUTION
BY REINHARD BONNKE

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6 USD

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Show off your love of Israel with this incredible watch! Created to commemorate this incredible Israeli milestone, this stunning watch features a modern blue design on its face of the number 70 along with the word ‘Israel’ written in Hebrew beneath it in a biblical font. With Hebrew letters instead of numbers, this marvelous watch is complete with a mechanical date display and a comfortable and stylish brown leather band. Perfect for both men and women, this astounding limited-edition watch will make a meaningful gift for someone you love that they will never forget!

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43 USD
“A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity...” (Psalm 68:5-6)

The Father-heart of God and His emphasis on family is clearly displayed throughout Scripture. It is the Lord Himself who sets people in families. So what a tragedy when anyone, much less a child, winds up “fatherless”.

Although Israeli society places high priority on families and children, there are still approximately 367,000 at-risk youth in Israel today. Over 10,000 children have been removed from their homes by social services, and only one in four are currently in foster care. Although 120 children on average are adopted each year, the standard waiting period for adoption is five years. That is a long waiting period for a developing child to spend outside a secure family structure.

Since every child deserves a permanent home, ICEJ AID is becoming more involved in adoption and foster care programs in Israel. One example is the adoption adventure of Colin and Helen. An ICEJ team recently visited their home to hear their amazing story first-hand.

When Colin and Helen made Aliyah from the United Kingdom to Israel in 2009, they fully intended to start a family. But soon after settling into their new home, the couple was faced with the heart-breaking reality that they could not conceive children on their own. Unwilling to give up on the dream of raising children, they explored adoption.

Adoption in Israel, however, is no easy journey. In addition to the normal bureaucracy, family court hearings, batteries of psychological tests, and home inspections familiar to any adoptive parents, Israel also requires the prospective parents and children to be from the same religious background. Although Colin and Helen are both believers in Yeshua, Israel considers Colin to be Jewish and Helen to be Christian. Although religiously-mixed households are relatively common in Israel, finding a baby with a matching religious heritage is rare.

In faith, however, the family submitted an adoption application which was rejected, not based on religion but due to Colin’s age. Frustrated by this answer, Helen cried out to the Lord and immediately heard Him say: “I am going to give you a child and it is not going to be difficult.”

When Colin & Helen learned of the desperate need for foster parents in Israel, they contacted an Israeli agency and applied to be a foster family. The social worker assigned to them was candid with the couple, explaining that although Colin’s age would not be a problem for the purposes of fostering, it would prevent the fostering arrangement from ever becoming an adoption. But she promised to do her best to find them a young child who needed their care.

Once their application was submitted, Colin and Helen had one
small concern: The next three months would be filled with travel outside of Israel. Colin had speaking engagements in several countries and Helen would be traveling with him. The agent assured them the approval process would take at least that long and they could travel without worry. Happy and trusting the Lord would answer their prayers, the couple proceeded with their travel plans.

Imagine their surprise when, the day before departure, the social worker called. A baby boy, born the day before, was in need of an immediate home. Since the child had one Jewish parent and one Christian Arab parent, the agency saw Colin and Helen as an ideal match. Shocked at this development, the couple considered cancelling their travel plans. However, with so many people relying on them, they prayed and told the agency they felt to honour their commitments abroad.

Resting in the Father’s promise
The baby boy who was a perfect match for their family was sitting at the hospital waiting to be loved. Once again, Colin and Helen put their trust in their heavenly Father; His timing was perfect, and He was in control of their future as parents. In that moment, His promise to “give them a child and it will be easy” became their foundation, and peace rolled in like a flood. So they began their three-month speaking tour, resting in the Lord’s assurance that He would provide.

And provide He did. Upon their return to Israel three months later, the couple were astonished to discover that their social worker, convinced this baby was “meant for them”, had placed the baby in a temporary three-month situation and he was now ready to come home with them. In the joyful months that followed, the Lord began to open doors that rested in the Father’s promises, despite the possibility that this baby they had fallen in love with might ultimately be taken away.

After many legal discussions, it was decided that the adoption could go ahead! But the Lord did not stop there: Before Joshua’s adoption could be finalised, the couple were informed that his birth mother was pregnant again, and the social worker who had first placed Joshua in their home wanted them to consider taking the sibling as well. The Lord had already been speaking to both Colin and Helen individually about growing their family even more. By the time the social worker came to their home, armed with her list of “reasons why” they should consider this, their hearts were already prepared, and the “yes” came naturally.

Three become four, and impact many
The story of “Lisa’s” journey to join this little family contained some of the same obstacles they encountered the first time. The state once again had a problem with the seeming incompatibility of religions, but the Lord made a way and the court decided not to separate the siblings. Lisa joined her brother and new parents and both children were officially adopted into Colin and Helen’s family.

Colin and Helen’s adoption saga has had a powerful impact on their local congregation, which is comprised of Jewish and Arab believers. Joshua was the first baby of both Jewish and Arab descent in the fellowship and seemed to tangibly symbolise their “one new man” identity. In addition to fulfilling Colin and Helen’s dreams of becoming parents and placing two unwanted children into a loving home, the Lord is using their story to reconcile and strengthen an entire community.

Throughout that process – which involved a battery of interviews, questionnaires and hearings – the unique religious makeup of their family, which seemed to perfectly match Joshua, became a constant topic of discussion. Colin recalled being asked numerous times, by social workers, lawyers and others throughout Israel: “So what exactly do you believe?”

At one point, however, this miraculous story seemed destined for a disappointing end. When it came to adoption, the state of Israel considered Colin and Helen together to be a “Jewish family” and Joshua a Christian, thus religiously incompatible. They had already waived the age restriction but were unwilling to suspend the religious requirement. However, many professionals involved in Colin and Helen’s story and touched by their love for the boy and each other, voiced their support. Once again, Colin and Helen rested on the Lord’s promises, despite the

While Joshua and Lisa are now part of a happy family, many more children are still languishing in Israel’s social system, desperately in need of a loving home. Join us in making sure they are placed with suitable families here in Israel! Your gift to ICEJ AID will help expand adoption in Israel and provide much-needed support for foster- and adoptive parents once accepted. (Note: Children’s names have been changed to protect their privacy.) Give to ICEJ AID today at: icej.org/aid
Sorrow of Death & Sweetness of Community
by Kayla Muchnik

Can you imagine spending 67 years with your best friend and loved one, and then one day they are gone? This is the sorrowful reality for Naomi, a precious Holocaust survivor who just lost her husband and closest friend, Avraham.

Death is difficult to face for everyone at the ICEJ’s Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa: for the residents who are losing their spouses and dearest friends, for the staff who are losing patients that have become like family, and for the actual families of the survivors who are losing beloved parents and grandparents. Since most of the more than 70 Holocaust survivors at the Home are now in their 80s and 90’s, such losses have been unfortunately occurring quite often over recent years due to their advanced age. Yet, they always seem to band together and pull one another through it all.

During the week of sitting shiva for Avraham - a time when family and friends mourn the passing of a loved one according to Jewish tradition - Naomi was visited not only by her own relatives, but also by her friends from the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors. The cook even made special visits to the family home to provide food for everyone.

ICEJ staff members Yudit Setz and Jannie Tolhoek warmly embraced their friend Naomi at the shiva. Due to the friendship and trust established over the years, Naomi shared from her broken heart that she did not know how she would live without her husband after 67 years of life together. Naomi’s tearful granddaughter also showed us one of her favourite memories, which was a photo of her dancing with grandpa Avraham on her wedding day.

The sweet comfort of community shared among the survivors, staff, and family members at the Haifa Home is tangible, especially in such times of grief.

These losses also are a reminder of the opportunity we have right now to show all the love and comfort we can to those Holocaust survivors still alive and under our care at the Haifa Home!

Please support the ICEJ’s Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors. Make your donation today at: https://int.icej.org/aid/haifa-home-holocaust-survivors

The Druze community put out a very warm, colourful welcome for the ICEJ at the dedication of a new computer room

Druse School Grateful for New Computer Room
by ICEJ Staff

The Christian Embassy has always sought to reach out to all the different people groups in the Land of Israel – whether Jewish, Arab, Christian, Muslim, Bedouin or Druze. In February, an ICEJ leadership delegation visited a special project in the Upper Galilee which we undertook at the request of a Druze welfare society. Over the past decade, we have partnered with this charity by sponsoring several youth-oriented educational projects, including a school library, a music room, and a high school robotics team that won a nation-wide competition. This time, we dedicated a new computer room with two dozen computer work stations, located in a mixed high school for Christian, Druze and Muslim students.

Upon arrival we were treated with utmost respect, as if we were royal dignitaries. Besides all the students and faculty, the local Druze mayor and regional council head also were waiting at the school to welcome our delegation. There were packed assemblies, speeches and musical performances, plus a bountiful lunch. It was truly impressive! We had a clear sense that this community does not take our gifts for granted. And our investment will bear fruit for years to come, giving these young minority citizens of Israel a better chance to succeed in this hi-tech nation.
EQUIPPING ISRAELIS TO FIGHT FIRES
BY KAYLA MUCHNIK

Just imagine seeing incendiary balloons and kites soaring through the sky, then watching one drop and set your field on fire, burning your crops within minutes. These are the kinds of daily attacks that Israelis living near the Gaza border have faced this past year.

These arson attacks are not as frequent during the winter months, as it is the rainy season when fields are relatively wet. Yet as soon as the summer heat arrives, the fields get very dry, arson attacks multiply, and the fires spread rapidly. Therefore, there is a great need for better firefighter training in Israel’s south.

With all this in mind, ICEJ-Australia recently funded a Christian firefighting expert to come to Israel to share his expertise and training with his local counterparts. In March, Tim Wainwright, a professional firefighter from Australia with 25 years of experience, visited the Negev and trained firefighters, security officers, community leaders, and youth in fire safety.

Even though this was Tim’s first time in Israel, he skipped touring the Bible sites and diligently poured out his knowledge and expertise to the security personnel and other residents in the farming villages near Gaza. In the youth village of Kfar Silver, for instance, local students learned how to protect themselves and others in case of a run-away brush fire.

All the students who received training from Tim were thankful that he came all the way from Down Under to teach them, not only in the classroom but also via hands-on training with fire safety equipment.

“Our class listened to an exhilarating lecture from an actual firefighter from Australia”, said Kate, a local Israeli girl. “We learned about fire, safety equipment and different methods to extinguish fires. Living near the Gaza Strip, this information might unfortunately become very useful… It was really fun and interesting as well.”

Tim’s visit will surely have a great and lasting impact. One young man at the youth village said he enjoyed learning about firefighting so much that he now has a dream to become a firefighter to help his people! So small seeds were planted in the hearts of these Israelis, even while they are now better prepared for the arson attacks that are likely to come this summer! 😊

Your support can make a difference in the lives of Israelis every day. Send your best gift to ICEJ AID today for our ‘Israel In Crisis’ fund. Go to: https://int.icej.org/aid/israel_in_crisis

MENTORING IN ISRAELI SOCIAL BUSINESSES
BY NICOLE YODER, ICEJ AID DIRECTOR

It was a pristine spring day in Israel’s south as ICEJ AID staff hosted German and Swiss Christians who came to see how their giving is impacting those in need and to learn about everyday life in Israel directly from the people.

Our tour included a visit to Pinat HaOchel (“Kitchen Nook”), a popular sandwich shop on a side-street in one of Beersheva’s more disadvantaged areas. Our host was Chai, the young proprietor. He described himself as a former youth-at-risk who had the benefit of learning the trade at Café Ringelblum just up the street. It was exactly what he needed at the time – to be mentored on the job. Café Ringelblum was established as a social business to help youths-at-risk learn responsibility, employment expectations and other life skills.

A ‘social business’ focuses on two bottom lines. One is to make a profit to keep the business viable. The other is to benefit the community in some way.

Chai’s life was changed through the things he learned at the mentoring café, and today he passes forward the good he received by helping other youth. One day, Chai hopes to have a whole chain of restaurants, and perhaps one of the youths he trains today will become a partner tomorrow. One thing he knows for sure, he wants his sandwich stop to make his neighbourhood a better place.

ICEJ AID is excited to sponsor mentoring programs for social businesses that are just starting out, when our support is needed most. These businesses not only provide employment in the periphery of the country, but they also strengthen and contribute to the communities where they live and work.

If you are in Beersheva, visit Pinat HaOchel and taste one of Chai’s delectable sandwiches for yourself. You will not only enjoy an affordable meal, but also have the satisfaction of knowing that, as a customer, you are helping one former youth-at-risk realise his dream while helping others begin to dream as well. 😊

You also can help Israeli social businesses today thru ICEJ AID! Visit us at: int.icej.org/aid
COMING HOME ALONE

BY HOWARD FLOWER, ICEJ ALIYAH DIRECTOR

The ICEJ recently sponsored two special children’s Aliyah seminars in Ukraine. The Naale Seminars are for young people who are preparing to make Aliyah to Israel without their parents. The seminars prepare them and their parents for the logistical and emotional challenges they will face. The youth will finish high school through the Naale program, and 96% of them will make Aliyah. At least 60% of their parents will make Aliyah later on, but initially the child must be prepared to make the journey home to Israel alone.

Many of the youth will be in the same schools in Israel, and they will need to depend on each other for support without their parents. The seminars use several types of group cohesion activities to build a support system within their group.

The word “Naale” is an acronym in Hebrew for “Youth Coming Before Parents.” The official program started in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1992 in the tumultuous days following the fall of the Soviet Union, when public schools were dysfunctional and Jewish parents requested that Israel receive their kids for better schooling. It was inspired by the Youth Aliyah Movement, which developed during WWII when parents who were concerned about the rise of Nazism sent their children to safety, hopeful they might be able to join them later.

The program has continued and serves distressed communities such as the Jewish community in Ukraine. The situation is quite bad there, and many families want a better life for their children in Israel but do not feel the whole family can make the move at the moment.

So far, more than 17,000 children have made Aliyah to Israel through the Naale program. The majority of them have come from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine where the future today is uncertain and parents hope for a better life for their children in Israel. Israel’s future is bright, and many opportunities await them there.

Help the ICEJ sponsor five Naale seminars in 2019: www.icej.org/support-aliyah
ICEJ helped almost 2,700 Jews make Aliyah to Israel in 2018 from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, The Baltic States, Central Asia, India, and Ethiopia. The need is increasing and with your help we will bring even more home in 2019.

Worldwide Aliyah in 2018

FROM THE FROZEN LAND TO THE PROMISED LAND

BY MAXINE CARLILL

Polina and other members of her extended family had never discussed going to Israel, but one day her son’s friend told her son, “I will go there because my mother is Jewish.” Polina’s son replied, “And my mother is Jewish!” This was the beginning of Aliyah for Polina’s family. Even when Israel is not part of a Jewish person’s thinking, God draws them back home.

Years earlier, three-year-old Polina, her baby sister, mother and other family members had fled from Ukraine ahead of the advancing German army and its accompanying ‘Final Solution’. The oncoming winter’s cold and German bombardment were part of that terrifying flight, first by foot and later by train.

The family eventually found two rooms in Ural, in which the ten family members could live. Polina’s mother found work that took her away from early morning to late at night, and with her father in the Red Army the little girls were looked after by uncles, aunts, and grandparents. Polina remembers the pain of being cold and hungry. Potatoes dug out of the frozen ground kept the family alive. After the war her father returned, but they continued to live in Ural, where Polina started school. Finally, they returned to Ukraine although nothing remained of their former life. They shared a small house with their grandparents in a forest village, and Polina recalls the dirt floor being cleaned before each Sabbath.

Poverty and hardship continued. At 6am Polina would line up to buy bread hoping there would still be loaves, or even part of a loaf left, when it was her turn. The cold and hungry eight-year-old dared not to nibble at the bread on the way home, because it had to feed five people. Poverty meant only a few new dresses as she grew, and shoes were saved to wear only in the winter. But amazingly, Polina said, “In spite of poverty and war, we were very close to each other and that meant my childhood was a good one!”

In 1958, Polina moved to Siberia and after further education became a meteorologist. Hard times continued under the Soviet Government which made all items scarce, including children’s clothing. One time, Polina purchased large woollen socks and unravelled the wool to reknit it into a warm item of clothing for her son.

Although aware of being Jewish, the communist regime in which she grew up meant she learned nothing of Judaism. Here in Israel, though she keeps only a basic observance of traditions, she has learned to turn to Israel’s God when things are difficult. And through Homecare’s assistance to family members, Polina has learned about Christian love and care.

“I didn’t want to come to Israel at first, but I am very happy to be here. Soon after I arrived I felt at home and that I had been here all my life,” says Polina, an elderly immigrant from the FSU.
“Therefore glorify the Lord in the dawning light...” (Isaiah 24:15a)

It has been one year since the ICEJ launched the PrayerWave last May in Washington, DC. This past year has been a journey of faith for everyone involved and we know the Lord is using it in many ways. It has been a privilege to partner with so many dedicated intercessors during these truly prophetic times.

The PrayerWave is a unique prayer initiative built around the vision of a worldwide network of intercessors who lift up a continual flow of praise and prayer to the Lord for Israel and the nations at dawn. Wherever the sun is rising, faithful prayer warriors are on their knees pleading for God to fulfill His purposes for Zion and all who love her.

Over 600 intercessors from 22 time zones have now taken hold of this vision, joining together in this 24/7 global prayer chain to release an unending cry for God to comfort Jerusalem and raise her up to be a praise in the earth.

To truly comfort Israel, we first need a love for the Jewish people and their Promised Land. This is often cultivated in the hearts of believers as they pray for Israel. Many participating in the PrayerWave have testified that as they intercede for Israel, the Lord has given them a deeper love for the nation, accompanied by powerful results in prayer.

An intercessor from Finland recently shared this touching testimony of how the PrayerWave has impacted his life:

When I gave my life to Jesus several years ago, I felt that prayer would be important for me somehow. But there seemed to be a high wall around me making it hard for me to pray; it always seemed like hard work and I thought God did not hear me. Praying was a big problem for me no matter how hard I tried, and I couldn't find the answer. A year ago, God began to answer my deep desire to draw closer to Him. First, He led me to Scriptures that awoke a deep love within me for Israel. Then, I joined the ICEJ and ordered the ICEJ magazine ‘Word from Jerusalem’. Last June I read your call to join the PrayerWave. Somehow, I knew that this was an answer from God, but I was afraid to make a commitment, because I had been disappointed so many times. By the grace of God, I decided to pray every morning for one week as a test. After that week my life had changed; God gave me this wonderful present - praying without effort! Now I want to pray every morning. It has been a great blessing for me, and I cannot live without praying anymore. Praise the Lord!

The PrayerWave is called to raise up an army of intercessors who will stand in the gap for Israel as it faces many daunting challenges each and every day. If the Lord is stirring your heart to join the PrayerWave, please answer the call and sign up today at www.icejprayerwave.com. When you sign up, you will receive weekly prayer points and inside information so that you can support the work God is doing here in Israel and throughout the world.

To highlight the work the Lord has done through the PrayerWave this first year, on May 14, 2019 the ICEJ will hold a 24-hour vigil of prayer and worship – from 12:00 midnight until 12:00 midnight on the 14th here in Jerusalem. As the sun rises on that day in your area, please join members from each time zone as they unite with us all around the world in prayer. Tune in on the ICEJ official Facebook page that day as we stream the entire event live. And send us your own prayer requests as well!

Sign up for the PrayerWave today at www.icejprayerwave.com!
During his March visit to Washington, DC to meet with US President Donald Trump, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro also met with a group of prominent Christian leaders, including ICEJ-USA National Director Dr. Susan Michael. At the CBN-sponsored event, Bolsonaro shared his vision for Brazil and received prayer and commitments of support from the Evangelical leaders.

Bolsonaro told the Christian gathering that he has experienced two major miracles, one that he is alive after an assassination attempt during his campaign, and second that he won the election. He now seeks to move Brazil in a new direction, away from its prior leftist leanings. His main goals include protecting the unborn, reversing socialism’s toll on Brazil, and strengthening his nation’s ties with Israel. He is looking to God for wisdom in the face of great opposition.

Dr. Michael introduced the work of the ICEJ to President Bolsonaro and encouraged him to move the Brazilian embassy to Jerusalem. He explained that his decision to do so was firm, but he was working out the best way and timing possible, to minimise any economic repercussions.

When Bolsonaro—a Catholic—previously visited Israel, he was re-baptised in the Jordan. While there, he noted how much the small nation has prospered despite its few resources and how it serves as a role model for Brazil, which has much greater resources.

The meeting was closed in prayer by Dr. Pat Robertson of the Christian Broadcasting Network, who prayed for Bolsonaro to be anointed by the Holy Spirit, protected, and strengthened for the challenging years ahead.

Over recent years, the ICEJ-USA branch has been arranging and leading numerous tours to Israel. After coming on an ICEJ-USA familiarisation tour last year, Pastors Murphy and Twila Matheny of Cedar Lake Church in Biloxi, Mississippi asked our US office to help them plan the first Israel tour for their congregation. In March, the group had a wonderful time of fellowship and faith-building as the Scriptures came to life in the Land of the Bible. Several experiences really stood out, including this incredible moment captured on camera at the Yardenit baptismal site as several members prepared to be baptised in the River Jordan (Photo courtesy of Betty Ladner). Then, during their visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem, a member of the group who had never surrendered her life to the Lord was overcome by His presence at the Kotel and asked Jesus into her heart on the very spot. Meanwhile, ICEJ-USA National Director Susan Michael helped organise and lead a recent tour of the Holy Land for the mega-church she attends, the Calvary Chapel of Ft. Lauderdale, led by Pastor Doug Sauder. The 140-person tour was a great success and many lives were touched and changed forever.
DOORS OPENING IN VIETNAM

BY MOJMIR KALLUS, ICEJ VP FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

More than forty years after the end of the bitter conflict which raged on its soil, the nation of Vietnam remains in the minds of an entire generation ever associated with the bloody war fought between the North and the South, but more broadly between the Communist forces and the Free World led by the United States.

The country is now united and despite residues of Communist ideology, it is generally open and allows Christians to live in relative freedom. Relations with Israel, opened in the 1990s, are booming in recent years, especially due to Israeli inventions and technologies which can significantly contribute to improving the life of its citizens. Today, Vietnam is a fast-developing country with over 90 million people, and it is becoming one of the major players in all of Southeast Asia.

In late February, I spent several days in the capital of Hanoi, as a result of previous contacts made with Sister Chung Bach at our regional conference in Singapore and at the ICEJ’s Feast of Tabernacles last year. I found the door to be wide open for cooperation with the growing body of local Christians. A dinner with 15 pastors from all over Vietnam was organised where I was able to share about the history, mission and vision of ICEJ. The next day, I conducted a seminar attended by about 80 people, mostly church leaders, who were shown ICEJ videos and heard about the biblical foundations of our support for Israel.

At the seminar, an umbrella organisation for Christian ministry to Israel in Vietnam was established, and the ICEJ is privileged to be a leading partner. The Chairman of the new organisation is Pham Tuan Nhuong, senior pastor of a Word of Life church in Hanoi, who will represent the ICEJ in Vietnam going forward. We hope to see a group from Vietnam at this year’s Feast of Tabernacles, as our cooperation and exchange continue to flourish.

KAZAKHSTAN

A GOOD REPORT FROM ICEJ-KAZAKHSTAN

BY SERGUEI POPOV

The ICEJ-Kazakhstan branch opened about two years ago, and since then God has carried out a great work among the Christians in this Central Asian nation. Many churches now celebrate Israel’s “Independence Day” every year in May. Monthly prayer services are held in the northern city of Karaganda and the southern city of Almaty. Kazakhstan also is one of the few Muslim countries sending “love offerings” to Jerusalem. Last year, 46 pilgrims from Kazakhstan attended the ICEJ’s Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, and more pilgrims plan to come this year. Please pray with us for God to continue to richly bless the work of ICEJ in Kazakhstan and other Muslim countries in the region and worldwide.
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