WHAT LIES AHEAD?
Is the 'time of Jacob's trouble' yet to come?

DARE TO DREAM
THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL'S REBIRTH
Dear friends,

As I write this, I find myself on a ministry trip to my native Germany, where I am taking part in a series of events related to the International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The meetings so far have been very moving, as we feature a dear Holocaust survivor with a powerful testimony of how God preserved his life during this great tragedy. Sharing his story in several public schools, he has told children that they need to learn how to pray because this is what saved his life. Such a message is rarely heard in public schools today, but its effect moved teachers to tears.

As Christians, we have a moral duty to respond to the Nazi genocide against the Jews, especially in view of the “silence” of Christians during that day. I see this duty playing a critical role in three ways:

First, we must educate about the Holocaust and fight the resurgence of anti-Semitism today, in order to protect Jewish communities still in the Diaspora. The ICEJ does this through our strategic partnership with Yad Vashem, through speaking tours like the one I am on currently, and in many other ways.

Second, we need to stand up against the “new anti-Semitism”, which today expresses hatred towards the State of Israel and represents the “collective Jew”. Thus, we are fighting the BDS movement and other efforts to demonise and delegitimise Israel. Therefore, we need every Christian around the world to join us in this effort, as the animosity towards Israel never seems to fade.

Third, we owe a special moral duty to aid and comfort the remnant of Jews who survived the Nazi Holocaust. They are most deserving of our love and care. This we are doing through our Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa and other programmes aimed at helping them live their lives out with dignity. We have exciting new plans to expand the Haifa Home, yet again, to house and care for even more survivors in need. Please join us in showing compassion and practical love to these precious souls.

Thank you for recognising this vital mission and for keeping this cause in your hearts and prayers.

In Christ our Saviour!

Dr Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ President

The New King James Bible is used for all Bible references unless otherwise noted.

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RESTORED FOR DESTRUCTION?

Is the ‘time of Jacob’s trouble’ still ahead of us?

“Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.” - JEREMIAH 30:7

BY DR JÜRGEN BÜHLER // ICEJ PRESIDENT
A few years ago, I listened to a sermon claiming that “the Jewish people did not learn the lesson of the Holocaust, so they need to go through more suffering, which will make the Holocaust look small in comparison.” A similar thought we frequently hear is: “Two-thirds of the Jews will die in the Great Tribulation.” In other words, the worst chapter in Jewish history is still ahead of us. Or to put it more bluntly, God is returning the Jewish people back to their homeland of Israel in order to kill two thirds of them in a massive conflagration. These views are usually linked to various quotes from the Old Testament prophets which seem to underline these points. One such passage is the above verse from Jeremiah, which speaks about “the time of Jacob’s trouble”. Other passages used to bolster this teaching are Zechariah 13:8-9 and Ezekiel chapter 5, which both speak about a time when two-thirds of those in the land will be wiped out.

The prophetic context
I personally have strong reservations with subscribing to this kind of interpretation, because I believe that it takes these passages out of context and, even more importantly, they misrepresent the character of God and His present purposes for Israel. At the same time, Scripture indicates that “the time of Jacob's trouble” and the time when two-thirds of Israel are to be cut off, refer to two different events in Jewish history. Allow me to explain.

A. Jeremiah and Jacob’s trouble
The prophet Jeremiah introduces in chapter 30 a great succession of passages (30-33) that foresee the restoration of Israel, culminating in a “new covenant” of changed hearts and the rule of the “Righteous Branch”. God makes sure that these prophecies will not be lost for future generations, as He explicitly tells Jeremiah to “write down” the words, because “I will restore the fortunes of My people… and I will bring them back to their land…” (30:2-3)

Then God begins to lay out, from verse 4 onward, the sequence for how He is going to accomplish this redemptive work. He first sees a picture of despair and calamity: “Cries of terror and panic!” concluding with the call: “Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble…” (30:7). Immediately following these verses, God’s restoration programme starts to play out. The Lord announces that change is coming as He breaks off the yoke of oppression (30:8), until Israel will finally serve God and His Messiah. He continues: “Therefore, do not fear, O My servant Jacob … For behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid.” (30:10)

This indicates that the ‘time of Jacob’s trouble’ represents an unprecedented catastrophe (‘none is like it’) at a time when Israel is still exiled. Out of this crisis, God is restoring them back to their land.

This is what we see fulfilled in the modern history of Israel: A nation that barely escaped complete annihilation in the Holocaust, with six million dead, yet they arose from the ashes of that great tragedy and returned to their homeland to re-establish the nation of Israel.

PHOTO: Some 4,000 people in Jerusalem listen to an address by Menachem Begin, from a balcony of the Tel Aviv Hotel in Zion Square, 11 August 1948.
B. Ezekiel and the scattered hairs
Ezekiel was the first prophet to foresee the calamity of two-thirds of the people of Israel perishing (Ezekiel 5:1-4). He prophesied these things during the Babylonian Exile, and was asked to carry out a strange act to demonstrate what was coming: to take a razor blade and cut off all the hair on his head and beard! Then “you shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, … then you shall take one-third and strike it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind…” (5:2) “This is Jerusalem,” explains the Lord. A two-thirds majority will be wiped out in famine, judgement and war, while the remaining one-third are not redeemed but scattered around the world, with harsh persecution following them even in exile. (5:2-4)

C. Zechariah and the sheep
Zechariah lived in the time when Israel was returning from Babylon. Chapters 12-14 speak about the end-time struggle and restoration of Jerusalem, climaxing in the redemption of Israel as the “spirit of grace and supplication” is poured out upon them. Yet right in the midst of these passages, the prophet inserts a vision about the Messiah…

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the man who is My Companion,” says the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; Then I will turn My hand against the little ones.” (Zechariah 13:7)

Jesus himself quotes this scripture (Mark 14:27), referring to its fulfilment in the Garden of Gethsemane, as his disciples fled leaving him to suffer alone. In a broader sense, it is also a picture of the entire nation of Israel being scattered three decades after Christ, who is the great Shepherd who was “struck” and died. In this context, Zechariah foresees tragic times for all of Israel: “And it shall come to pass in all the land, says the LORD, that two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it.” (Zechariah 13:8)

The accounts of the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius tell us that during the first Jewish uprising, prior to the destruction of the Temple, some 1.1 million Jews lost their lives in the land of Israel. Just a few decades later, during the Bar Kochba revolt, the Roman historian Cassius Dio tallies another 580,000 Jewish casualties, with the surviving remnant being exiled. This would bring the total number of casualties in both revolts to over 1.7 million people.

Moreover, the Jewish historian Salo Wittmayer Baron estimated the population of Israel at 2.3 million at the time of the Roman emperor Claudius (41-54 AD). Two-thirds of this number would represent some 1.5 million people. So, there is amazing accord between these secular histories and the words of the Hebrew prophets foretold some 500 years earlier. Both the history books and the prophetic context of the ‘stricken shepherd’ compel us to place these events in the past and not in the future.

Jesus himself foresaw this calamity over Israel when he wept over Jerusalem. “And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations” (Luke 21:24). Zechariah likewise foresees an extended period of judgement for Israel, with two-thirds perishing while the one-third remnant is placed through the “fire” of exile, followed by their eventual redemption.

Thus, a common thread can be followed throughout these prophetic writings in Jeremiah 30-33, Ezekiel 5 and Zechariah 13. The process of Israel’s redemption starts with the rejection and striking of the Shepherd. This is followed by a huge upheaval in the land of Israel where two-thirds are “cut off” with the remaining one-third scattered to all the nations. This exile is accompanied by the refining fire of ongoing persecution and culminates in a final calamity outside the land known as ‘Jacob’s trouble’. Finally, it ends with a national restoration of Israel that ultimately gives way to her spiritual restoration as well.

This very same sequence also can be found in the great chapters of Ezekiel 36-37, while Psalm 102 also foresees a Holocaust-type ordeal after which God declares that “the time to favour Zion has come!”

The new paradigm of favouring Zion
The prophets indicate that once God’s restoration purposes with Israel set in, nothing can stop or interrupt it anymore. Zechariah tells us that Jerusalem will become a “cup of drunkenness” for the world and that the nations will eventually gather against Jerusalem. Although, the same prophet also declares that it is the nations who will be judged, while Israel is delivered and comes out victorious.

The restoration of Israel represents a paradigm shift in how God is dealing with the Jewish people. The prophet Isaiah starts his restoration-chapters (40-48) with the call to “Comfort My people” and to cry out to her, “that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins” (Isaiah 40:1-2). This expression “her iniquity is pardoned” could be better translated from the Hebrew as “her debt has been settled”, or “she has paid for her sin”. Rather than pardon or forgiveness, it reflects the idea that God has completed His season of judgment with Israel and He is no longer dealing with her according to her sins. God is telling the world to cry out to Israel saying that her warfare and time of judgement has ended, and a new season of restoration lies ahead of her!
Likewise, Zechariah declares: “But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,” says the LORD of hosts… ‘Just as I determined to punish you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘And I would not relent, so again in these days I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear.” (Zechariah 8:11-15) This means that God has started an unwavering restoration process representing a radical shift in how He deals with Israel. This does not mean He will never again correct Israel, like a loving father would his son, but it will be done “with measure”. (Jeremiah 30:11)

The way to redemption
Finally, the teaching that Israel will only receive her Messiah through yet another period of great judgement, misrepresents the character of God and even mankind. In general, great human catastrophe does not lead to repentance but rather to the contrary. Pharaoh, after the severest plagues, only hardened his heart even further. The book of Revelation parallels this by describing humanity as hopelessly in rebellion against God, even after His great wrath unfolds in the last days: “And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.” (Revelation 16:11)

Catastrophic judgments like that which occurred to Israel in 70 AD were not God’s way to call His people back to Him; rather, they expressed His sense that their measure of sin was full and demanded divine justice. Jesus declared, “Your house is left to you desolate…” (Matthew 23:38)

Similarly, the great tragedy of the Holocaust left most Jews asking “Where was God?” Many even lost their faith in Him. As one Holocaust survivor once told me: “For me, God died in Auschwitz.” The Apostle Paul, on the other hand, declares that “the goodness of God leads you to repentance”. (Romans 2:4)

God’s way of redeeming His people is a story of His covenant faithfulness and eternal love restoring them (Jeremiah 31:2). In contrast, the message of God to the nations in our day is not that more judgement is waiting for Israel, but: “Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, ‘He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.” (Jeremiah 31:10) This can surely include measured discipline by the corrective staff of the good shepherd, yet it will lead to green pastures of salvation.

This is the call we are committed to at the Christian Embassy: declaring God’s mercy and faithfulness to Israel and to the nations. We are declaring that a new season of restoration has started, and we are challenging the Church to join God in this great restoration work with Israel. Our call is to “Comfort My people” and to declare to Israel that a new chapter has started, which will lead not to another holocaust but to all of Israel being saved!

Israelis dancing at the Western Wall plaza in the Old City after the unification of Jerusalem in 1967.
THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL’S REBIRTH

BY DAVID PARSONS, ICEJ SENIOR SPOKESMAN

The modern-day rebirth of the nation of Israel seventy years ago is such an unprecedented act in world history, and is considered an outright ‘miracle’ in the most classic sense of the word. That is, it could only have been achieved by divine intervention. This is especially true in light of the uniquely dire circumstances under which Israel’s re-emergence among the family of nations took place. The prophet Isaiah alludes to these travails when he asks: “Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labour, she gave birth to her children.” (Isaiah 66:8)

In 1948, the Jewish people were still reeling from the tragedy of the Holocaust. The enormous scope and depravity of the Nazi genocide against the Jews was still being uncovered, and two-thirds of European Jewry had been gassed or gunned down en masse. Most of the surviving remnant were on the brink of starvation, and few wanted to return to their homes. They knew their neighbours had never really accepted them, and likely never would.

Such calamities were nothing new for the Jews. For centuries they had faced pogroms, blood libels, forced conversions, expulsions and other forms of religious persecutions, yet this was the lowest point. The racial anti-Semitism of the Nazis had reduced them to sub-human status as if they were vermin slated for extermination. As a people, the Jews felt they had reached a dead end.

The prophet Ezekiel spoke of such a time when Israel would say as a people: “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!” Yet God declared that all was not lost. At their lowest moment, He would assuredly “cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel” (Ezekiel 37:11-12).

The great miracle of Israel’s rebirth in May 1948 was that it happened just three years after the Holocaust ended. From the ashes of the Shoah, the Jewish people suddenly arose and re-established sovereignty in their ancient homeland. At their time of greatest weakness, they were empowered in a way that had eluded them for centuries, and it was nothing less than the resurrection power of God at work.

Even more astounding is the fact that Israel faced another very serious threat of annihilation as it was reborn. When its founding leader David Ben-Gurion declared independence for the Jewish state on 14 May 1948, it was immediately attacked by five invading Arab armies. These Arab forces were armed, trained, and in some cases even commanded by officers from some of the world’s major powers. In contrast, the international community placed an arms embargo on the fledgling state of Israel, and only one...
When His disciples asked Jesus for His views on the end times, He pointed to the “days of Noah” as the key to unlock the timing of “the coming of the Son of Man.” But what exactly did He mean by that? FLOODGATES unravels precisely what happened in the Flood of Noah and explains why this important biblical event is such a fitting analogy for our day. This book offers a clear biblical paradigm for determining where we are on the prophetic timetable, based on the actual teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

**The Great Miracle of Israel’s Rebirth in May 1948**

Was that it happened just three years after the Holocaust ended?

The following year of 1949, the United Nations voted to admit Israel as a full member state during a time when numerous nations were securing their independence and joining the international community. Many nations were also born out of the widespread suffering of the First and Second World Wars, therefore there was great sympathy for these nations, as well as Israel. However, Israel stands out for the way it overcame the greatest odds and rewrote history.

The Jews are the only people who have been thoroughly uprooted from their homeland to then return to that same land and re-establish their national sovereignty. You could search far and wide and still not find another people who have managed to do this even once, and yet the Jews have done it twice! What makes this all the more remarkable is that the Bible, which they gifted to the world, told us all this was going to happen before it came to be. The Scriptures declared beforehand that there would be two scatterings and two returns of the Jewish people – first from Babylon and then from all the nations of the earth.

It was this very Bible which kept the Jews together as a people during their long centuries of exile. This same Bible planted in them a prophetic hope of return and national restoration, which became the driving force that brought them back – quite literally – from the grave.

The Apostle Paul relies on these prophetic passages when he speaks of a promised future restoration for Israel in the Book of Romans. He teaches that even Israel’s scattering had a redemptive purpose for the Gospel to go out to all nations and thereby reconcile many to God. Yet when it finally comes time for Israel’s ingathering, Paul says we can expect no less than “life from the dead!” (Romans 11:11-15) That is, the resurrection power of God will still be at work in the earth when the Jewish nation is finally restored in their ancient homeland.

We live in a day when we have witnessed these things coming to pass. Seventy years after Israel’s miraculous rebirth causes us to question: Will we align with those who are trying to put the Jewish people back in their graves? Or will we be among those who are found rejoicing in the incredible way God has brought the nation of Israel back to life?
Many Holocaust survivors who were children and teenagers during World War II are now nearing the final season of their lives. This is our last chance to make a positive difference in lives that began in severe adversity and abject cruelty. We were not there at their desperate beginning, but we can give them our love and support now for a different end.

The Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors has expanded into nine buildings in Haifa. This includes entire buildings used to house Survivors (buildings 2 & 5), as well as apartments in other buildings renovated to house additional Survivors (buildings 1, 3-4, & 6-9). Location 10 is the prospective new building for the Haifa Home.
WE HAVE NO TIME TO LOSE

The growing number of aging survivors means that we are expanding our Haifa Home care facility. There are already several residents in our Home that would greatly benefit from this new facility. To provide the best treatment possible and to keep our residents within the community of people they know and love, our aging survivors need a separate building near the Haifa Home community. We now have the opportunity to purchase such a building and provide for its operating costs. This building, following renovations, will become home to thirteen survivors who require nursing care around the clock.

THE BUILDING PROJECT – CHANGING THE END

Despite the Holocaust being seven decades behind us, this event continues to affect the minds of individual survivors and shape the collective Israeli consciousness. This is why it is so important that we as Christians today show our unequivocal love and care for the remaining Holocaust survivors. The ICEJ is proud and privileged to play a pivotal role in Israel's first care facility exclusively dedicated to Holocaust survivors. It is amazing that children and teenagers who experienced such adversity at the beginning of their lives are still alive to tell the tale even till this day. Survivors, such as Judith (see next article), retell their stories and continue to witness so that the world will never again unwittingly slip into the horrors of industrialised genocide.

We want to do our part and make sure that Jews never again doubt Christian love and compassion for God's people. We were not there in the beginning, but we want to change the end. The Haifa Home is the living manifestation of this desire, and rest assured it will be a legacy that present and future generations of Jews will notice and cherish. Please join our effort to comfort and cherish these little ones whom God saved out of the Holocaust.

With great sincerity, Judith expressed her gratitude to the ICEJ, “From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your help. I don't have words to express how beautiful it is that you are helping us. We are so in need of your help. Thank you!” The ICEJ needs your help to continue to support and bless these beloved Holocaust survivors with the tangible love of God!

HAIFA HOME - Judith’s Story

BY KAYLA ELLINGSWORTH

A Holocaust Survivor Gives Thanks to Christians

“I now have a very pleasant life that I never had before, until I came here. And I'm happy,” are the words spoken by Judith, a dear Holocaust Survivor. For the past three years, Judith has been a resident at the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors that is sponsored by the ICEJ. Like all of the other survivors living at the home, she has enjoyed a quiet apartment, meals, groceries, house cleaning, community activities, a loving staff who cares for her every need, and much more!

We now have the opportunity to purchase such a building and provide for its operating costs. This building, following renovations, will become home to thirteen survivors who require nursing care around the clock.

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Cheerfully give today at: icej.org/haifa_building
FLOODGATES
BY DAVID R. PARSONS
FLOODGATES unravels precisely what happened in the Flood of Noah and explains why this important biblical event is such a fitting analogy for our day. This book offers a clear biblical paradigm for determining where we are on the prophetic timetable, based on the actual teachings of Jesus and the apostles.

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PLAYING DEFENCE
– Protecting What We Love Most

BY DAN HERRON

The Qassam rocket strikes home and splinters into lethal fragments. Moments before, you were enjoying life with your children on the playground. The 15-second warning before impact just wasn’t enough time to get the family to the nearby community shelter or for Iron Dome to intercept the incoming rocket. Even if you did make it to safety, it quickly becomes uncomfortable and frightening to be cooped up in an underground shelter with your kids and other families. This is the nightmarish but sadly realistic dilemma faced by parents in Israel’s frontline communities. Thankfully, there are viable solutions to solve this perilous predicament.

Destructive power for protective purposes
To whom do you turn in order to deal with such a threat? Ironically, but logically, the ones who know best to counter lethal ordinance are the ones who themselves produce high-powered explosives and munitions. This is why ICEJ Aid was recently invited to tour Israeli Military Industries (IMI), at an undisclosed location in Israel.

IMI is the only company in Israel with a test lab to simulate and experiment with the live firing of rockets. IMI has reverse-engineered the most prolific rockets that Hezbollah and Hamas have in their arsenals, and have constructed mobile, highly versatile shelters that can sustain multiple direct hits from Qassam and Grad rockets.

One of IMI’s newest innovations is a shelter integrated with a playground. But why is a mega-defence conglomerate that exports to 70 countries worldwide interested in meeting with a Christian NGO and even building this type of shelter? Because their core vision is to protect that which matters most: the Israeli family unit. This is why the ICEJ’s efforts to fund bomb shelters (55 and counting) make us highly honoured and important customers.

Innovating to protect vital routines
The R&D expended on shelters and reinforcement measures is impressive. Beyond immediate physical survivability are considerations for the viability of shelters as enabling structures for protecting the routines of civilian life. This is why the playground shelter is so important. It allows a semblance of normal life even in a frontline area.

The ICEJ wants to do its part to protect civilian life during conflagrations and the constant pressure and threat that Israel’s adversaries try to impose on civilian life in Israel. Join us in defending the most vital unit in Israel – the family. We are making a real difference, but there is still work to be done. Please help us build Israel’s defences today.

ROCKETS DISRUPT CEREMONY

BY AARON HECHT

On 29 December 2017, a ceremony was held at Kibbutz Kfar Aza, near the border between Israel and the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip, which marked the would-be 24th birthday of Oron Shaul, an IDF soldier killed in action during the 2014 war between Israel and Hamas. The ceremony, which was meant in part to protest the fact that Hamas refuses to hand over the remains of Shaul so his family can bury him, was disrupted by an unusual day-time barrage of Qassam rockets from the Strip. The Iron Dome air-defence system intercepted two of the rockets while a third landed near a building in the kibbutz, causing some damage but no casualties.

Israelis take cover during a rocket attack at Kibbutz Kfar Aza near the Gaza border, 29 Dec 2017.
COPING WITH PTSD THROUGH SAILING

BY LISA SCHMID

“The Boat is Sailing” is a unique programme that helps people with PTSD by using sailing as a rehabilitative and therapeutic tool. It was developed by Yoav Ben David, a former POW from 1973, who personally dealt with PTSD. For many years Ben David searched for a way to cope, and he discovered that sailing in a team can boost the rehabilitation process. “The participants come to know that their disability need not deny them exhilarating new experiences in unfamiliar settings, such as in the open sea,” Ben David says. “They learn to take responsibility for others and to deal with challenging situations as well as working in a team. They are also encouraged to share their traumatic experience among programme participants.”

A research study conducted by the Ministry of Defence in 2009 showed that this programme rehabilitates individuals with PTSD much better than any other traditional treatment. “The participants find a reason to live, wake up in the morning, engage in work and interact with other people. It also gives them the motivation to integrate into life and society again,” says Ben David. Sixty participants meet once a week in six small groups for sailing sessions to learn about the sea, symptoms of PTSD, and sailing skills. Participants can later become counsellors and guide new members in this activity.

One of the participants, Yotam, experienced a terrorist attack that killed many soldiers at the bus stop where he was waiting with many others to return to his base. Yotam doesn’t recall much, except that someone stopped him when he walked down the road drenched in blood. Shock and trauma affected him so deeply that he withdrew from all social contact and was unable to cope with daily life. Very slowly, through the “Boat is Sailing” programme, he began to find a way to deal with his PTSD. His small group gives him the strength to carry on despite the ongoing emotional challenges that he continues to face every day. 🧜‍♂️

Your donation will help to enable additional veterans to participate in this supportive endeavour! Donate online to: int.icej.org/crisis

ICEJ URGING MORE NATIONS TO RECOGNISE JERUSALEM AS ISRAEL’S CAPITAL

BY ICEJ STAFF

After US President Donald Trump decided last December to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move the American Embassy here, several countries announced their intention to follow his lead. For example, the Czech Republic and the Philippines both quickly gave official recognition to Jerusalem, while President Jimmy Morales of Guatemala went further by deciding to return his nation’s embassy to the capital city. The ICEJ was actively involved in urging the leaders of Guatemala and the Czech Republic to take these actions, and we have called on our national representatives around the world to continue to engage their governments on this issue. There are even certain regional blocs of nations – for instance in Eastern Europe and in East and West Africa – which potentially could take joint action in this regard.

In addition, when the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in December denouncing the American decision on Jerusalem, there were 65 nations which either voted against (nine), abstained (35) or were absent (21). ICEJ President Dr Jürgen Bühler has written to the heads of state of these countries, thanking them for their respective stands and urging them to recognise Jerusalem and move their embassies to the Israeli capital. We encourage all our friends and supporters worldwide to join this effort by letting your government leaders know you stand with Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Jewish state. 🤝
BLESSING ISRAEL’S ALLIES
BY YUDIT SETZ

REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE, WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP (ROM 12:15)

The Temple Mount is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it also has ramifications for communities far removed from Jerusalem. This was evident when ICEJ Aid visited the widow and family of First Sergeant Hail Stawi in the Northern Golan Heights. Stawi was one of two Border Policemen that were killed in the terrorist attack on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem on 14 July 2017. He left behind his wife and a three-week-old baby boy. We brought words of comfort and material support in this incredibly sad situation of losing this man who was a husband, father, son, and brother.

Yet we also had occasion to rejoice on this visit north where we inspected a new ICEJ-sponsored computer room, now with 26 computers where there formerly had been none. We were welcomed with a parade worthy of any high dignitary, and the principal of the school was delighted with our gift, “Your wonderful donation will help our students advance so they can reach their potential and excel. These computers, for which we are so grateful, will greatly help toward that goal. Thank you so much!” It was a festive opening in the presence of the head of the local council, the principal and his staff, parents and students and other dignitaries.

The ICEJ has had the privilege over the past few years of equipping many educational rooms in the schools of different Druze villages in Israel’s north. These initiatives are very important. Unlike Muslim Arabs, most Druze have a strong sense of civic duty toward the State of Israel, even to the point of giving their life in the line of duty, as Hail Stawi did. This makes the Druze natural allies and partners for the Jewish state. Strengthening Druze communities helps demonstrate that Jews and Arabs need not be at each other’s throats but can co-exist and protect Israel together.

HELPING YOUTH AT RISK
BY KAYLA ELLINGSWORTH

Last year the ICEJ gave 45,000 USD for scholarships for youth at risk to enter the Touching the Horizon’s programme. This programme provides youth who are at risk of dropping out of school with mentorship, self-confidence and the motivation to continue to complete their studies, and to pursue their future with great inspiration and hope. We look forward to helping many more youth-at-risk not only finish school, but also to pursue their dreams!
CHOOSING TO REMEMBER – A VISIT TO YAD VASHEM

BY DAN HERRON

Yad Vashem combines the double feature of being both an impressive museum and a state-of-the-art educational centre. Its symbolic architecture subtly leads you through an insightful and dreadfully sobering experience of history’s darkest hours but ends in the open vistas overlooking the Judean Hills.

Stepping into Yad Vashem’s main building you immediately notice the inward-sloping walls that join in the skylight running the ridge of the building’s roof. The walls are meant to convey a sense of the steadily increasing desperation and despair crushing the Jews of Europe, while the skylight symbolises the fact that their persecution and suffering took place in broad daylight.

Each bend of the path through the museum’s displays represents a development and escalation toward the “Final Solution”, starting with the German race laws in the 1930s, continuing over to the ghettos of starvation in the conquered lands of Eastern Europe, the mass shootings in the deep forests, ending in the final phase of industrialized killing, representing the total, unbounded attempt to annihilate the Jewish people wherever they could be found.

The scale of hateful disdain and the increasing efficiency of the mass murder numbs the mind. How anyone could survive is beyond comprehension. Still more stunning is the notion that anyone could recover to build a new life after the Holocaust. Yet this is what the grandmother of our guide did. One clue to why this was at all possible comes as our guide recounts her grandmother’s encouragement during difficult times of her childhood, “What beautiful thing happened today?” she would ask her granddaughter. When she would respond that absolutely nothing deserving that label had transpired during the school day, her grandmother would reply, “Come, tell me about your day, and I will help you find that beautiful thing.” Imagine how hard it must have been for the grandmother to dig out that precious daily diamond in the squalor of the ghetto and ghoulish wasteland of the death camps. This is spiritual survival at its finest.

Our second-to-last stop is in a room of remembrance, containing 4.7m confirmed names of Holocaust victims. The end is not here, though. The end is a beautiful vista overlooking the Judean Hills, a stunning tangible reminder that Jerusalem, the symbol of Jewish life and existence is today the capital of the State of Israel, fulfilling the vision of Ezekiel 37.

In 1948, ten years after the Kristallnacht, which marked the onset of systematic destruction of Jewish buildings and culture, the Jewish people were still fighting for their lives. But now they were doing so in a Jewish army defending the Yishuv, the nascent State of Israel. An estimated 60% of the Jewish Army fighting in 1948, the most casualty-intense of all of Israel’s wars, were Holocaust survivors. Because of them and in their honour, we rejoice over Israel’s founding 70 years ago.

SARA NETANYAHU HONOURS ICEJ’S HOME FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

On 28 January, ICEJ VP & Senior Spokesman David Parsons joined Sara Netanyahu, four Knesset members, and hundreds of Holocaust survivors for a ceremony in Haifa to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Here, Sara Netanyahu cut the ribbon to officially open a new Holocaust Museum at the ICEJ’s Home for Holocaust Survivors in Haifa. Parsons assured the gathering that while the world’s sympathy for Jewish suffering can often wear off quickly, the love of millions of Christians for Israel today is steadfast and sure.
This January, the largest contingent of international pastors and church leaders to date chose to launch the new year at the ICEJ’s annual Envision Conference in Jerusalem.

Their intent was to refresh their spirits and gain new insight and inspiration about what’s afoot in the Land of Israel: In short, to get the pulse of God’s purposes and moves there. The ICEJ’s own Bible scholars, local Messianic leaders, and Israeli politicians and military personnel were at the ready to share critical knowledge and equip participants with novel perspectives.

Through panel discussions, conference participants found out first-hand about the situation on the ground from several Messianic Jewish and Arab-Christian leaders, who spoke candidly about advances and struggles. In this manner, participants learned how Israel is a light unto the nations, e.g. through a Messianic-led project developing a peer-to-peer app for African farmers to get their crop to market in a timely fashion by connecting them directly with far-away buyers.

Israel’s small Messianic body is coming into its own and boldly setting up ministries and discipleship initiatives aimed at deeply rooted growth.

Elisabet Helrvig from Norway appreciated this direct access, “I encourage everyone to come to the country and hear the words from the people of the country and from the people who have been long supporters and friends of Zion.”

Events in Israel do not occur in isolation to the rest of the world. Dealing with Israel does not mean a narrow focus on events and trends in the Jewish nation itself. Israel is God’s central key to understanding what is happening in the prophetic timetable for His people, the Middle East and the world.

Islam’s status in the Middle East has been severely invalidated through uprisings and the scourge of ISIS, causing many Muslims to question their religion and open up to the Gospel, reported Fabian Grech from Iraq, who thanked God that “in the midst of darkness Your name is becoming famous!”

Lt Col Moreno gave the conference’s perhaps finest example of Jewish-Christian relations as he reported on the IDF’s cooperation with Christian organisations, such as the ICEJ, to...
save lives and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. IDF soldiers and Christian aid workers were mutually impressed by the others’ will to sacrifice and serve.

Participants were also exposed to Jewish leaders. This happened with a visit from Keren HaYesod’s World Chairman, Moodi Sandberg, and interaction with Israeli politicians and decision makers during a visit to the Knesset. Another excursion highlight included an outing to Shiloh and the Barkan industrial park.

“I have been to a lot of conferences, but this one is really unique because we were able to see the sights and get input from the Word of God from so many people.” Pastor Iris Trumper, Germany.

Envision again proved that it is the perfect venue for plugging into what is moving in the land spiritually and for equipping pastors about the Lord’s purpose for Zion. ☺️

Sign up for next year’s Envision conference here: envision.icej.org

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE IN HOME CARE

BY KAYLA ELLINGSWORTH

For 25 years, Corrie van Maanen has been involved in impacting many hearts with the love of God through Homecare. These treasured people have been invalids and elderly who are mainly immigrants and part of the flood of Russian-speakers that poured into Israel after the Iron Curtain came down. From the beginning, the ICEJ was involved in this new wave of immigration, and Homecare became an important part of the hand of friendship being offered.

Over these years, the Homecare team has proven to be consistent and faithful. This persistent dedication nurtures the deep connections that continue to be made between this Christian nurse and the Jewish recipients of God’s love through her.

After 25 years of faithfully serving God here in Israel through Homecare, the first word on Corrie’s lips is “thankful”. Corrie can only give thanks to the LORD for His faithfulness, wisdom, and strength given in all of the difficult situations.

“Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.” (Jeremiah 32:41)

We invite you to join with us in prayer and thanksgiving to our faithful God for all that He did, is doing, and will do through ICEJ Homecare to impact each and every one of these treasured lives! ☺️

Learn more at icej.org/homecare
TRANSFORMING DREAMS INTO REALITY
PREPARING FOR THE ISRAELI JOB MARKET
BY DAN HERRON

Good parents naturally concern themselves with preparing and enabling their children's education and careers. But what if you find yourself in a country where you don't know the ins and outs, and where competition is particularly fierce? This is where the ICEJ steps in as a partner for new immigrants. We are key sponsors of "Immigrants Together", a true success story.

Coming from the African continent to Israel's highly competitive labour market is no easy leap. Even if you manage to obtain a college degree from an Israeli university, cultural challenges persist for new graduates, and their networks are much less developed. "Immigrants Together" fully compensates for these shortcomings, enjoying a high completion rate with programme participants subsequently finding professionally suitable jobs.

Moreover, this job-placement programme produces positive spill-over effects because it is a cooperative endeavour, inspiring and drawing in all walks of Israeli professionals. This means that participants benefit from an extensive network incorporating 2,500 mentors and volunteers, a crucial help for new arrivals.

In this way, graduates have landed jobs such as section head in the Ministry of Justice, police attorney in the Israeli Police force, etc. In the private sector, a business school graduate became the assistant to the humanitarian committee and administrative council at the Bank of Israel, while an engineering student qualified for a position at Israel Aerospace Industries.

In joining this effort, you will help knit together the fibres and sinews of a strong Israeli society and be a blessing to new arrivals and their children.

NORTHERN ALIYAH ROUTES – THE FINNISH CONNECTION
BY ICEJ STAFF AND THE JEWISH AGENCY

The ICEJ is pleased to report that 3,079 people benefited from our Aliyah programmes in 2017, which represents a 44% increase over the previous year. A portion of these new immigrants made Aliyah from Russia via Finland, with the aid of Finnish Christian supporters of Israel. Finland has been an active station in the Aliyah network since the end of the Cold War. Elena Konashkova and her daughters, Olga and Alyn, are one family who immigrated to Israel through Finland from St Petersburg. They sent a thank-you letter to the family that hosted them during their stay in Finland:

"You created conditions for our family's stay that we could never have dreamt of. Thank you to our hosts, who were pleasant, friendly, bright and wonderful. You helped make our immigration a pleasant experience. With much respect, a huge thank you."

Israeli officials note that immigrants arriving in Israel are usually fatigued upon arrival, except those travelling through Finland and then continue rested onward to Israel, happy and optimistic.

"Thank you for your continued support to new immigrants travelling via the ICEJ's Aliyah network. icej.org/aliyah"

ETHIOPIAN ALIYAH ON TEMPORARY HOLD

Again this year, the government's decision to go forward with bringing the last 9,000 Jewish Ethiopians home to Israel has been stalled. Yet we hope and pray that the authorisation and funds for the next 1,300 Olim will be granted later in the year. Please join us in prayer for this important decision.

In joining this effort, you will help knit together the fibres and sinews of a strong Israeli society and be a blessing to new arrivals and their children.
ICEJ Canada’s Donna Holbrook & team led an Israel tour of 82 delegates in January to conclude their “150 Ways to Bless Israel” campaign, which culminated with Canada’s 150th Birthday, Balfour100 & Jerusalem’s Jubilee, during Israel’s 70th anniversary. Inspired by a generous donor gift of $150,000 toward an MDA ambulance & medical scooter, and our shipment of 150 HBC polar fleece blankets, along with 150 handmade cards for the Haifa Home Holocaust survivors, our members were only limited by their own imaginations about what 150 gifts they would make for our aid projects; elderly, orphans, deaf students, new immigrants - from handknit scarves, sweaters, toiletries, school supplies including 150 bottles of kosher CDN maple syrup! We planted 150 trees thanks to JNF Canada-Israel and prayed 150 prayers as we toured from Tel Aviv, Haifa, Galilee, Jerusalem, Dead Sea and Negev. None of us will be the same again after such a personalised life-changing experience with those who live in the land of Israel. Visit www.icejcanada.org to learn more. 😊

ICEJ SPONSORED ALIYAH SUMMER CAMPS IN LATVIA

The ICEJ Aliyah department helped sponsor two Jewish Summer camps in cooperation with the Jewish Agency. The first camp was for children ages 6-11 with a great attendance of 65 children and 20 leaders. They received an introduction to the geography of Israel and learned the Hebrew alphabet.

The second camp was for students ages 17-18. They learned about Israel’s Naale programme, a Youth Aliyah programme allowing students to complete high school in Israel at boarding schools, and about the Selah programme, which prepares students for University in Israel. Almost all Naale and Selah graduates make Aliyah, and more than 60% of their parents join them in the land. 😊

We expect great things for what God will do in the lives of these youth, and we need your help and support to make these camps a possibility again next summer! Send your gift today: icej.org/aliyah

ICEJ HONOURS FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS IN ISRAEL’S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The ICEJ recently launched its year-long celebration of Israel’s 70th anniversary by partnering in a project to remember the courageous volunteers from abroad who came to Israel in 1948 to help defend the new nation during its War of Independence.

At a special ceremony held at Ammunition Hill in Jerusalem, in the presence of Mayor Nir Barkat, a stone memorial was unveiled to honour the more than 4,900 ”Machalniks” who fought alongside Israeli troops from 1947-1949. Hailing from 59 countries, they included not only Jewish men and women but also 168 Christian volunteers who put their lives on the line to help Israel survive at its national rebirth. Many were veterans of World War Two, and their military experience proved invaluable in securing victory against the Arab onslaught. At the dedication ceremony for the Machalnik Memorial, ICEJ President Jürgen Bühler delivered an encouraging message that today Christians around the world are still volunteering their time and efforts to defend Israel from those who would seek to destroy her.

Meanwhile, ICEJ-UK Director David Elms paid a visit in January to the London-area home of Derek Bowden, who is believed to be the last surviving Christian volunteer fighter from the 1948 war. Now at age 96, Bowden has a long and distinguished record of military service, concluding in his training of the IDF’s first paratroopers unit during the War of Independence. 😊
The ICEJ headquarters building saw an excited hustle and bustle during the ministry’s annual strategy review late in December. The spectacle was caused by President Trump’s seminal decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. Both our president and international spokesman were called out during the meetings for television interviews and articles had to be written and statements drawn up.

Senior leadership and operational directors also discussed important new developments and how to position the Embassy at the beginning of this new diplomatic era. New project initiatives and organizational priorities and activities across the spectrum of public diplomacy, Christian-Jewish relations and hands-on practical help and aid for Israel’s society were also on the table. The DNA and heart of the ICEJ ministry was reaffirmed as comforting God’s people (cf. Isaiah 40:1) with an active realization that we are living in a season of fulfillment and restoration for Israel.

In a season of new things for both Jerusalem and Israel, we would like to take the opportunity to wish our Chinese readers Happy Chinese New Year!!! The ICEJ is grateful for the support and vision from our five regional branches in the Chinese-speaking world. In the past year, we have seen how the biblical prophecies over the nations and Israel are coming together for the families of the Earth. We are happy and confident that the Chinese people play a significant role in His plans. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you three special blessings for your new year:

That all desires of your heart be fulfilled (Psalm 37:3-4)

Financial abundance (Luke 6:38)

Blessings and harmony in your family (Psalm 133:1-3)

In January, the government changed the penal system to enforce a penalty of 7-12 years in prison for inviting people to join religious organizations or places of worship. Thankfully this law was repealed by Bolivia’s president. We hope and pray that our national director, Alberto Magno Sales de Olivera, and his wife Gladys will continue to fill auditoriums with thousands of people celebrating Israel. The joy, energy and popularity of these meetings is remarkable. Let us give thanks that this move was annulled and the role of the Church in Bolivia strengthened!
EARLY 2018 SAW ANGRY, SOMETIMES VIOLENT, PROTESTS BREAKING OUT AGAINST THE CLERICAL REGIME IN IRAN. DEMONSTRATIONS WERE HELD IN OVER 80 CITIES DENOUNCING THE REGIME FOR CORRUPTION, SPENDING MONEY ON FOREIGN ADVENTURES AT THE EXPENSE OF DOMESTIC CONCERNS LIKE AFFORDABLE HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND HEALTHCARE, AS WELL AS FAILURE TO STOP A CRISIS IN THE BANKING SECTOR WHICH LEFT HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF IRANIANS PENNILESS.

SECURITY FORCES KILLED AT LEAST 22 PROTESTERS, WOUNDED HUNDREDS, AND ARRESTED OVER 4,000 PEOPLE. SINCE THE PROTESTS DIED DOWN, REPORTS HAVE SURFaced THAT DOZENS OF PEOPLE WHO WERE ARRESTED DIED IN CUSTODY FROM TORTURE AND ABUSE.

ELAM, AN EVANGELICAL MINISTRY WHICH REACHES OUT TO IRAN AND HAS MANY CONTACTS IN THE LARGE AND RAPIDLY GROWING UNDERGROUND CHURCHES THERE, POSTED A NOTICE ON 4 JANUARY SAYING: “WE URGE PEOPLE TO INTERCEDE FOR THE ROYALNESS AND PEACE OF CHRIST TO RULE ALL OVER IRAN.” IT WENT ON TO REQUEST PRAYER AGAINST BLOODSHED IN ANY FUTURE PROTESTS, FOR FREEDOM FOR THE IRANIAN PEOPLE AND TO BUILD UP THE BODY OF MESSIAH INSIDE THIS STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT COUNTRY.

A GROUP OF COURAGEOUS BELIEVERS DISPLAYING THE COMPASSION OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN SHARED THEIR STORY WITH US IN CHAPEL ONE MORNING. WITH A SMALL MEDICAL TEAM OF ONLY SIX PEOPLE, THEY TRAVELLED INTO A SYRIAN VILLAGE UNDER ATTACK TO LOVE THEIR NEIGHBOURS AS THEMSELVES. THE TEAM ALLOWED THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO FLOW FROM THEIR HEARTS TO THE PEOPLE IN THE MIDS OF BOMBINGS, UNCERTAINTIES, GOING BEYOND THEIR MEDICAL CAPABILITIES, SEVERITY OF WOUNDS, AND THE REALITY OF DEATH AROUND THEM.

THE TEAM LEADER, EMANUEL, EXPLAINED THE VISION THAT PROPELLED HIM AND HIS TEAM TO COURAGEOUSLY GO INTO A BATTLE ZONE IN SYRIA TO SAVE AS MANY LIVES AS POSSIBLE. “WE HAVE A NATION BLEEDING AND PEOPLE DYING EVERY DAY. JUST LIKE THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN EVERYONE IS WATCHING; WE SEE THE PRIEST AND THE LEVITES PASS BY, BUT IT TAKES SOMEONE TO COME OFF OF THEIR ‘HIGH HORSE’ TO HELP THE HURTING.”

PLEASE PRAY FERVENTLY FOR OUR CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS GOING INTO WAR ZONES TO SHARE THE LOVE OF GOD AND SAVE LIVES! JOIN US IN BEING LIKE THE GOOD SAMARITAN, WHO IS A PICTURE OF OUR SAVIOUR JESUS, BY JOINING THE ISAI 62 CAMPAIGN TO PRAY FOR THE PEOPLE WHO ARE WOUNDED AND IN NEED AT: ICEJ.ORG/ISAIH-62-PRAYER-INITIATIVE
ASSISTING FAMILIES IN NEED FOR PASSOVER

HELP JEWISH FAMILIES CELEBRATE PASSOVER THIS YEAR AS COMMANDED IN THE BIBLE!

Exodus 12:21

The biblically commanded Feast of Passover is the most widely kept tradition among Israel's Jewish population, bringing families, communities and generations together for a communal meal and time of fellowship. Sadly, many families are hard-pressed to assemble the traditional foods, drinks and implements for the occasion due to financial hardship.

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has a history of assisting needy families to celebrate this biblical Feast with dignity and joy. ICEJ Aid's representatives will personally hand out gift bags for Passover, which contain food items, towels and a gift card. This personal and caring touch is a powerful message that will impact the Jewish heart. Please help us help them celebrate this Passover!

TO DONATE VISIT: ICEJ.ORG/PASSOVER