‘HEAR, O ISRAEL’

THE SHEMA IN JEWISH FAITH
FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear friends,

In recent months, the COVID pandemic has gathered new momentum and another wave is paralyzing international travel, including to Israel. I cannot help but think of the times of Elijah, when Israel was visited by a three-year drought. This was a season when God tried to catch Israel’s attention to hear His voice and turn their lives back to Him. The word of God tells us that the days of Elijah will come again before the Lord’s return.

As this magazine arrives in your home, we are just about to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem under the theme “The Days of Elijah”. We had hoped so much to welcome Feast pilgrims to Jerusalem this year, but unfortunately travel to Israel is again greatly restricted. But like last year, this will not stop us from celebrating the Feast.

We do this for one simple reason: The Feast of Tabernacles is not the feast of the ICEJ, but the Bible calls it the “feast of the Lord” (Leviticus 23:4). And while He commands Israel to always keep this festival, He invites the nations to join them as well (Zechariah 14:16).

The good news is that while you may not be able to come to Jerusalem, we will bring the Feast to you! You can watch it at home with your family, with your Bible study or prayer group, or in your church. With God’s help, we will again utilise the latest technology to bring you the Feast in the best quality possible.

We will come to you from Qumran in the Judean desert, the Sea of Galilee, and from the steps of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, among other places. Great servants of God from around the world will join us: Lou Engle, Angus Buchan, Mike Bickle, Philip Mantofa and Mosy Madugha are just some of the powerful speakers who will share the word. They will be joined by anointed worship leaders from both Israel and the nations. You surely will be blessed as we expect timely and challenging revelations on the ministry of Elijah and what it means for our day.

I am particularly excited that you can participate in the 24/7 prayer chain which will run during the entire Feast. Last year, we heard amazing testimonies of answered prayers even on a national scale and we expect God to work mightily even more this year!

One last thing about the Feast of Tabernacles: God calls it “an appointed time” (mo’ed in Hebrew). This means God has entered in His heavenly calendar a fixed time to meet with Israel and the nations of the Middle East; regarding God’s purposes with Israel and the faithfulness of God to keep His ancient covenant with the Jewish people. Our main objectives are:

* To stand with Israel in support and friendship;
* To equip and teach the worldwide Church regarding God’s purposes with Israel and the nations of the Middle East;
* To be an active voice of reconciliation between Jews, Christians and Arabs and to support the churches and congregations in the Holy Land.

From its head offices in Jerusalem, the ICEJ reaches out to more than 170 countries, with branch offices in over 90 nations.

Our vision is:

* To reach every segment of Israeli society with a Christian testimony of comfort and love, and;
* To reach and actively represent to Israel the support of denominations, churches and believers from every nation on earth.

The Christian Embassy is a non-denominational faith-based ministry supported by the voluntary contributions of our members and friends across the globe. We invite you to join with us as we minister to Israel and the Jewish people worldwide by doing all that we are able to do in our day.

I am looking forward to welcoming you to this year’s online Feast on “The Days of Elijah!”

God bless you as you read this issue! And see you at the Feast of Tabernacles!

Dr Jürgen Bühler
President
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

COVER PHOTO: An Orthodox Jewish man at prayer (sunseeker.it).

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Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad!
“Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one!”

This is known as the Shema – the most central prayer in Judaism. It is considered the main confession of Jewish faith. As such it is different to our Christian confessions, which usually are expressed in multiple series of declarations: “We believe, …” The Jewish confession, however, is not so much a “we believe” statement but a divine command to hear, to listen to the voice of God regarding who He is – the one true God. The Shema has such a sanctified status, that for many rabbis the short phrase “Shema Yisrael” is equal to the very name of God, many times just symbolized with the Hebrew letter ש [shin].

Every Jew is supposed to pray the Shema at least twice a day, in accordance with the above passage from Deuteronomy 6 that you should say it “when you lie down” [in the evening] and “when you rise up” [in the morning]. This is at least according to the prominent Jewish sage Shammai, who lived around the time of Jesus.

The second passage included in the traditional Shema prayer is taken from Deuteronomy 11:13-21, which underlines the prayer’s spiritual significance: Blessing comes with obedience, but if Israel should turn aside from Adonai they would “perish from the good Land” the Lord had given them.

Finally, the third passage comes from Numbers 15:15-41, where the command is given to undertake practical steps to incorporate the Shema into daily customs and rituals. This includes the command to place the fringes (tzitzit) on one’s garment, the mezuzah at every door post, and the binding of phylacteries to love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength.

HEAR, O ISRAEL!
THE SHEMA IN JEWISH FAITH

BY DR JÜRGEN BÜHLER • ICEJ PRESIDENT
“HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE! YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH. “AND THESE WORDS WHICH I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE IN YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE UP. YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND, AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES. YOU SHALL WRITE THEM ON THE DOORPOSTS OF YOUR HOUSE AND ON YOUR GATES.”

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9 -

The ancient tradition of binding phylacteries (tefillin) on the arm and forehead – all of which contain the Bible passages recited in the Shema.

(tefillin) on the arm and forehead – all of which contain the above-mentioned Bible passages. This ancient tradition to combine these passages in the Shema prayer dates back well over 2,000 years and is already mentioned in the Qumran scrolls.

Jewish rabbis teach that with every recital of the Shema prayer, every Jew accepts the yoke of the Kingdom of God upon his shoulders.

The Shema is the very first prayer taught to a Jewish child when they start speaking, and it is the very last prayer a Jew is taught to say on their death bed. It also became especially noted for its dramatic usage during the Holocaust.

Jews being marched to the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau. They often said the Shema together in their last moments of life.

Former Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau has repeatedly told the story of how many Jewish children were hidden in Christian orphanages during the Holocaust. When they searched for the Jewish children after the war, it was often difficult to find and separate the Jewish youths among the Christian orphans. But Rabbi Lau said it was enough just to start proclaiming “Shema Israel”, and the Jewish children would instinctively reply with “Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad.” Many of these rescued Jewish children are still alive in Israel today.

In addition, the Shema prayer was on the lips of the more than one million Jews who perished in the Nazi gas chambers at Auschwitz, the more than 33,000 Ukrainian Jews murdered in the massacre at Babi Yar outside Kiev, or the scores of Jews who died at the execution wall of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp outside Berlin.

THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMAND
The question we need to ask ourselves is: Does the Shema bear any significance for us as Christians and for the Church? The answer comes directly from Jesus. When asked to
identify the most important commandment of the Bible, Jesus replied:

“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.”

- Mark 12:29-30 -

According to Jesus, it carried the highest relevance as the most prominent biblical commandment for his disciples and all who would follow him. For Christians, it is therefore noteworthy that God defines His relationship to His people most clearly through the means of hearing – “Hear, O Israel!”

There are other senses which God could have used to define His relationship to us. Besides hearing, we also have taste, touch, feeling, seeing and even smelling. Jesus himself repeatedly called his disciples to “come and see”. Or he could have chosen even Psalm 34:9 as the defining verse of our relationship to him: “Taste and see that the Lord is good!”

The medieval cathedrals – with their spectacular stained-glass windows, gold covered statues, paintings and frankincense filled air – touched exactly these senses. But the hearing part fell woefully short, as the sermons back then were delivered in Latin, a language which very few understood. Even today, our emotions are well served by spectacular new church buildings and holistic experiences in our services, but we often forget that the kingdom of God should be less ‘show-business’ and much more ‘hear-business’.

**THE CHALLENGE TO LISTEN**

Interestingly, it was exactly the ‘hearing’ part that Israel also often struggled with. The prophet Jeremiah repeatedly challenged Israel for not hearing what God had spoken. “Hear this now, O foolish people, ... who have ears and hear not...” (Jeremiah 5:21); “… Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed ...” (Jeremiah 6:10); “… I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you, but you did not answer...” (Jeremiah 7:13).

As a consequence, Jeremiah saw Israel being judged by God and exiled to Babylon.

And if we are honest with ourselves, this was not just Israel’s problem but so often it also is our very own problem today. Even the disciples struggled with hearing and understanding the message of Jesus (Mark 8:17ff; 16:14). And this means we all need to be watchful over how we hear. Thus, Jesus admonishes his disciples: “Therefore take heed how you hear!” (Luke 8:18).

That means in the eyes of Jesus there is hearing, and then there is truly hearing. You can hear and yet not really listen to God’s voice. It is this perpetual struggle to hear Him which presents possibly our biggest challenge as believers.

Let’s be honest! How many sermons have we heard, how many Bible studies have we attended, how often have we read the Bible, yet so little has changed in our lives. Too often, we select between what we want to hear and what we deem as not relevant for us. Already in Paul’s time, Christians were drawn to teachers who “tickled their ears”, who taught what the people wanted to hear rather than what they needed to hear. And even more, we often are sincerely touched by God’s voice in a sermon or daily reading, but our busy lifestyles distract us immediately and we become what the Apostle James calls “forgetful hearers” (James 1:24ff).

God speaks to us in many ways. Of course, primarily it is through the Word of God, the Bible, and through the preaching of the Word. But often He also talks to us through circumstances or even in our very own daily lives. But do we hear?

I well remember a visit to Holland years ago. Our national director there, Jacob Keegstra, took me to Westerbork, one of the few concentration camps in the Netherlands. Walking through the radio telescope dishes on the site of the Westerbork concentration camp in the Netherlands.
from Westerbork, we passed by an array of huge radio telescopes directed to heaven. There, Jacob explained to me, the faintest signals from space could be detected. I marvelled on humanity. We have grown so sophisticated to be able to listen to the slightest sounds from outer space, but there in Westerbork, as in Dachau or Auschwitz, humanity failed to hear the deafening cry of God: “Where is Abel your brother?” And in our busy lives we cannot hear Him cry to us even now: “Adam where are you?”

Shema Yisrael!

Some did listen during Hitler’s rule in Germany, like Pastor Theodor Dipper (1906-1967), who led dozens of other pastors around Stuttgart in hiding and rescuing Jews during the Holocaust, risking their own lives. Or there was Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who preached regularly against Hitler and his deceptive and evil empire.

But God also speaks today, through Israel. The Swiss theologian Karl Barth wrote in 1967, when Jerusalem was reunited in the wake of the Six Day War: “Now we can read it in the newspapers: God keeps His promises!” But are we listening? Do we react when He speaks? And do we act upon what we hear and see?

Shema Yisrael!

God also spoke to His people during the days of Elijah through three years of devastating drought. Life became very difficult as harvests were lost, and people starved and lacked life-sustaining water. For sure, people must have died. But when Elijah’s voice resonated from Mount Carmel: “‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word.” (1 Kings 18:21)

The question is, are we listening during this current coronavirus crisis? I am concerned when I hear people say all they want and pray for is just to return to normal, to the life they lived before COVID-19. God spoke to us at the Christian Embassy just a few days before corona hit through the prophet Haggai, who foresaw a great shaking to come over the world. It is a time of divine reset when God is calling us back to Him, back to more prayer, back to spending more time in His presence, back to re-evaluating the priorities in our lives. Are we listening?

Shema Yisrael thus means for us not just to hear and but also to act. Our hearing needs to result in practical changes in how we deal with our neighbours, our spouses and children, or how we spend our time and money. “Hear, O Israel” means that all our being, our strength, our heart and mind is directed in a loving way to God.

Remember that for Jews, Shema Yisrael means to accept the yoke of the Kingdom of God upon oneself. It therefore places us under a higher authority: the Lord is God, the Lord is one! He is the Creator of heaven and earth, He is my and your Creator. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and thus demands to be the ultimate authority over our lives – right to the smallest detail. But He does so as a loving Father who wants and knows what is best for every one of us.

Yet He also is the one who will judge the living and the dead and who will make us answerable even over every idle word. Therefore, to hear now and to respond accordingly is the most wise and prudent thing for all our lives. It is this call that the letter of Hebrews brings to all of us: “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” (Hebrews 4:7)

Let us be hearers of the word of God, and doers as well!

Shema Yisrael!
There were rising hopes that Israel would soon open up once again for Christian tourists, but a fourth wave of the coronavirus has the new government heading back towards tightening restrictions on foreign visitors. Until the country welcomes tour groups again, the Land of the Bible continues to divulge its many hidden treasures proving the accuracy of God's word.

Just in recent months, there have been numerous archaeological finds verifying the accounts in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

For instance, excavations in the ancient City of David have just uncovered a layer of destruction dating back some 2,800 years which does not correspond to any ancient battle or conquest of Jerusalem, leaving archaeologists to surmise it may be proof of the major earthquake which struck the city mentioned in the books of Amos and Zechariah. The unearthed ruins include shattered clay vessels, lamps, cooking utensils, bowls and storage containers which were damaged when the walls of an ancient building collapsed. The books of Amos (1:1) and Zechariah (14:5) both refer to a great earthquake which shook Israel “in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah.”

Archaeologists are finding many other fascinating artifacts in the City of David which continue to prove that the walled city indeed served as the capital of the Davidic dynasty ruling over the Kingdoms of Israel and then Judah in the time frame given in the Hebrew Bible. For example, recent digs uncovered a missing eastern section of the outer city wall of Jerusalem that the Babylonians encountered when laying siege to the city in 586 BC. Other finds in the same area relate to Second Temple times, including recently unearthed arrowheads and other weaponry from the Roman conquest in 70 AD.

Meantime, a pair of large, magnificent adjoining chambers were recently unveiled in the area of the Western Wall tunnels which are believed to have been part of an ornate public hall used
Archaeologists have recovered scraps of fabric dyed in royal purple from the time of kings David and Solomon.

Elsewhere, an ancient clay jug was recently found in a dig at Khirbet al-Ra‘i, believed to be biblical Ziklag (e.g. 1 Samuel 30), with a very interesting ink inscription of the name “Jerubbaal”. This is the name given to Gideon in Judges 6:31-32 and can mean “Let Baal plead against him” or “May the lord be great”. The jug inscribed in an ancient Canaanite script dates back 3,100 years to the time of the Judges, when Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal at Ofra and led the Israelites in defeating the Midianites in the Jezreel valley. While it is not certain that the inscription on the pottery has a direct connection to Gideon, experts say it does reveal how the Bible preserves authentic names from this early period in Israel’s history.

In recent months, the excavations at Tel Azekah (where David slew Goliath) have revealed not only pottery and walls of the fortified Israelite city, but also skeletons of troops who fell in battle there. The human remains are believed to date to when the Bible says that King Sennacherib destroyed Azekah at the time of the Assyrian invasion of the Kingdom of Judah more than 2,700 years ago (see 2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36).

Several months ago, archaeologists also reported finding dozens of fragments of a biblical scroll dating to the Bar Kokhba revolt in 135 AD – the first such discovery of an ancient biblical parchment in some 60 years. The scroll, written in Greek, includes portions of the Twelve Minor Prophets, including the books of Zechariah and Nahum. The rare find was uncovered during a concerted national effort to locate and preserve any remaining ancient parchments from looters of antiquities operating in the Judean Desert and Dead Sea basin.

Finally, at Timna, near the southern tip of Israel, evidence has recently been discovered which indicates that Israelites were indeed working the copper mines located there in the time of King Solomon, as the Bible suggests. Until now, many archaeologists and scholars had dated the copper mining activities at the site almost exclusively to an earlier Egyptian presence in the area. Among the groundbreaking new finds, archaeologists have recovered scraps of fabric dyed in royal purple from the time of kings David and Solomon. The special dye comes from a certain species of local snails used to produce the unique purple and blue colors adopted by Israelite kings and priests, and which were eventually incorporated into Jewish prayer shawls and today’s Israeli flag.
A TIME TO REFRESH AND REFUEL IN JERUSALEM!

BY LAURINA DRIESSE

When ICEJ AID assistant Jannie Tolhoek entered a Jerusalem hotel lobby on a recent summer day, she was greeted by many smiling faces. Their beautiful smiles belonged to the dedicated social workers from the Sderot region in southern Israel.

When the Christian Embassy learned about the intense burden these social workers were carrying during and even after the recent Gaza rocket war in May, we immediately planned a brief respite to help them recharge in the always fascinating city of Jerusalem. The ICEJ treated the social workers to several nights in the stylish new Orient Hotel, which boasts a lovely rooftop veranda overlooking the Old City.

Yigal Levi, deputy director of Social Welfare in Sderot, explained that while they were under constant missile attack from Gaza, each one of these social workers left their own families – both day and night – to go from house-to-house checking on other families in their community. With under 30 seconds to seek shelter when the red-alert sirens sound, many families in this region spent most of their time in shelters, surrounded by the terrifying sounds of explosions.

“These social workers assisted a family where a child was killed while the traumatised family hunkered in their shelter. Their home took a hit from a rocket and shrapnel killed the child,” said Yigal.

Israeli social worker Naomi Zolberg has lived with her family in Sderot for 20 years and finds it very difficult to leave her three children at night to go out to help others. “They are also scared. It’s not easy”, says Naomi.

During the recent Gaza war her family was separated, as her husband and three children went to stay with relatives outside of the Sderot area, while she remained behind to focus on her work and care for other families. “The rockets were relentless and in the middle of helping people, we had to go with them into the shelter and see them through this time of panic – there are people screaming, while others just freeze from the trauma” says Naomi.

Mayan Givoni, also a social worker, currently cares for 45 at-risk teenagers participating in both formal therapy and non-formal groups. Playing musical instruments in therapy and counselling sessions is a tool often used to aid in the healing process for these teens.

“As social workers, we give so much, and we don’t take time for ourselves. We know that there are people depending on us, calling us and we need to be there. So, this break is what we need to be filled up again, so that we can continue to work”, said Mayan.

Jannie commended the social workers for the amazing work they do, saying: “Thank you for standing in the gap and helping the families to cope, as this is a huge burden that you carry on your shoulders. The ICEJ is so happy to bring you to the capital city of Jerusalem, to allow you to recharge and enjoy all the wonderful sights.”

“It was a very hard 11 days, but we will survive and not allow our enemies to win,” responded Yigal. “We thank you and your donors all over the world for giving our social workers the opportunity to come to a hotel to refresh.”

The excitement of being in Jerusalem and having some time out was hugely evident and an applause of gratitude filled the hotel lobby! Among the many activities planned for the group, they thoroughly enjoyed a tasting tour of the Mahane Yehuda food market (the ‘shuk’) and a visit to a chocolate-making factory, while the evenings were fun-filled with singing and music.

Thank you for supporting the work of the ICEJ and helping us to bless those who show so much care and dedication to others, often sacrificing their own needs and that of their families.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO GIVE AT: on.icej.org/givinghope
Through our “Giving a Future and a Hope” programs, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem offers practical assistance and a brighter tomorrow to disadvantaged Israeli families through various social projects. In recent weeks, this included being able to help feed hundreds of Israeli households in the Ashdod and Jerusalem areas who have been severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Over recent years, the ICEJ has helped sponsor a food assistance project through Beit Hallel, a help center in Ashdod which assists new immigrants, Holocaust survivors, single mothers, and other disadvantaged citizens of Israel. Since the corona lockdowns began last year, this assistance has become more necessary than ever. Recently ten of our Jerusalem staff also paid a visit to Ashdod, in southern Israel, to help fill food packages for 300 households in need.

Jacques, one of the organizers, greeted our team with great anticipation. That day they had only a small group of people to prepare food packages for distribution and were therefore grateful for our ICEJ staff who came to fill the gap and complete the packaging.

“Every person who receives this help knows that they have Christian friends all over the world who love them, pray for them and who help them from the bottom of their hearts. Thank you! You are a great blessing and help to us”, he said.

Throughout the entire day, an extraordinary atmosphere of friendship and support reigned. In conclusion, Oleg, the head of the help center, expressed his gratitude.

As part of our ‘Giving Hope’ AID program, the ICEJ also recently delivered food packages to thirty struggling Arab families living on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The community there has been hit hard due to the corona pandemic, which completely stopped tourism to Israel – one of the main financial sources for the Jerusalem Arab community.

Over recent months, a generous invite allowed the ICEJ team to operate elements of our global prayer ministry from the ‘Father’s House’, a house of prayer on the Mount of Olives with an amazing view of the Eastern Gate and Temple Mount. Relationships built in our time there helped to open a door of opportunity for us to lend a helping hand to our Arab neighbors during this difficult time.

Thank you for your generous giving – which allows us to bless the people of Israel in many practical ways. Our “Giving Hope” programs provide needy Israelis with educational and economic empowerment, lift children from broken homes and youths at risk, promote coexistence among all segments of Israeli society, and assist struggling new immigrants and minority communities.

If you want to be a part of offering practical aid and broader opportunities towards a brighter future to Israelis in need, please donate today. 📦

TO GIVE, GO TO: on.icej.org/giving hope
THE MULTI-CULTURAL TAPESTRY
OF THE HAIFA HOME FOR
HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

BY YUDIT SETZ

A beautiful tapestry begins to emerge as one looks at the “family” of residents and staff at our Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors. Despite all the tensions in Israel between Jews and Arabs, religious and non-religious, a culturally different group of people are woven together here by the common goal of giving Holocaust survivors the best life they can live in their last years. Added to this multi-cultural fabric are foreign caregivers from Asia and Eastern Europe and the ICEJ’s Christian staff, making the Haifa Home so unique!

Here’s a look at the dedicated staff caring for the Holocaust survivors:

SARAH’S CAREGIVER
Sarah, age 93, is assisted by Israeli Arab caregiver Sabrina, 29, who helps her for five days a week. Born in Jerusalem into a Muslim family, Sabrina moved to Haifa when she got married and soon joined our “family”.

“It was love at first sight”, Sabrina recalled about the day she first met Sarah. “In school we learned about the Holocaust, but Sarah also shares her past with me. I like to listen, and I like to learn. I have a special relationship with Sarah. I love to help her and know what she needs even without words being spoken. We laugh a lot too!” said Sabrina. Sarah half-jokingly responded: “Sabrina is very important to me. I will not give her to anyone else!”

This lovely relationship between a religious Holocaust survivor and a religious young Muslim woman is contagious. “I love to work here. Everyone, residents and staff, know me and love me, and I feel like I am part of a family”, said Sabrina.

BOUTROS THE PAINTER
Born in Nazareth to a Christian Arab family, Boutros (56) started to work at the Haifa Home some 18 months ago. He is continually fixing and painting people’s homes and helping residents with odd jobs. The residents and staff love Boutros because he does great work and is very friendly. “The residents are all like my mother, who also lives in a Home for the elderly. I love to help them and do work for them” said Boutros. Holocaust survivor Esti had to exclaim: “He is such a great guy” as she passed by while he was fixing the staircase in her building.

JULIA OUR CHEF
An only child in a Jewish family, Julia (48) immigrated to Israel in 1996 from Ukraine, together with her husband and daughter. Their second daughter was born in Israel. Her parents also immigrated soon after.

Both her parents suffered during the Holocaust and her grandmother’s entire family were murdered. Early last year, Julia became our chef and works with a team to prepare three daily meals for the residents. “It’s so much fun to serve the residents. That’s why I come to work with joy every day. I love them and want them to feel good”, said Julia. Whenever Julia receives a request from the survivors for a special traditional dish they like, she happily makes it for them.
NANU IN THE DINING HALL
Nanu (40) was born in Gondar, Ethiopia. Her family had dreamed of seeing Jerusalem for generations. When she was a little girl of 10, her family set out on foot and walked for one month to reach the nearest big city. From there they took a bus to Addis Ababa. In 1991, she arrived in Israel with her family in Operation Solomon.

Nanu lives with her husband and two children in Haifa and although she was never able to fulfil her dream to become a social worker, she is happy to serve our residents in the dining room. “I love to help people, especially the elderly. During the meals I have a lot of interaction with them.Everyone is so nice, and it gives me a lot of joy to be able to help”, said Nanu.

FADI THE SOCIAL WORKER
After finishing several degrees, among them social work, and a diplomatic stint at the Israeli Embassy in Jordan, Fadi (38) decided to concentrate on social work and the elderly, as this is his passion. Born in Hurfeiz to a Druze family, he is happy to work with our survivors. “The Druze are a minority within a minority in Israel. I very much identify with the Israeli people, who were a minority in Europe and everywhere they lived. I am very much aware of their suffering. I love to help people who do not have a voice and I want to be that voice in those places where it needs to be heard” expressed Fadi.

NAOMI, WHO IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE
In 1963, Naomi immigrated from Poland to Israel with the “Youth Aliyah” program. Families were not allowed to leave Poland at the time, so her parents and youngest brother came later to Israel.

Naomi is always only a phone call away and works far beyond her normal hours. Over the past seven years, she is always willing to try to solve any problem, big or small, that residents may have. She is an indispensable member of the staff.

“For me, it’s the closure of a circle. What I couldn’t do for my parents, I am able to do for the residents today and that gives me much joy”, said Naomi. Both parents suffered unspeakably in the Holocaust, but never said a word to their children. It was only when Naomi was already married with three children that she stumbled by accident upon the painful past of her mother. The only thing her mother said is: “I survived Auschwitz, because they used me as their sex slave…” Her father survived the Babi Yar massacre near Kiev, managing to stay alive in the mass grave and flee to join the partisans. Only at the end of his life while he was sick, did they discover the great wounds on his back and hear his story.

A NEW CHANCE FOR AHMED
Three months ago, Ahmed (49) started to work doing maintenance and odd jobs at the Haifa Home. After spending 27 years in-and-out of prison, he truly desired to make a complete change in his life. He married, moved to Haifa, and now has two daughters. The next step was to support his family, but with his past, not many people were eager to hire him. “In prison different Holocaust survivors came to visit us and share their stories of suffering. This touched me so deeply. I felt these are the people I want to help the most”, said Ahmed. When his wife heard about the Haifa Home, she came to visit and inquired about work for Ahmed. There was certainly enough to do and Ahmed was given a new chance to prove himself and serve others in need.
ICEJ SPONSORS ALIYAH FLIGHTS FOR FRENCH JEWS

BY DAVID PARSONS

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem helped to sponsor a special charter flight of 160 French Jewish immigrants who landed at Ben-Gurion Airport in late July hoping to start a new life away from the rising antisemitism in France.

The chartered flight was arranged by The Jewish Agency for Israel and the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, and was funded by leading Jewish and Christian donor organisations, including the ICEJ, which sponsored seats for 32 of the new arrivals.

ICEJ representatives were on the tarmac to welcome the French Olim, along with Israel’s Minister of Aliyah Pnina Tamano-Shata, MK Yair Golan, Keren HaYesod world chairman Sam Grundwerg, and JAFI’s interim chairman Yaakov Goel, among other dignitaries.

Tamano-Shata, who made Aliyah herself from Ethiopia at age three, also accompanied the new immigrants on the flight from Paris after spending several days in the French capital with government officials and Jewish community leaders to assess the current situation for French Jewry.

France is still home to the second largest Jewish community outside of Israel (after the United States), with an estimated 500,000 members. However, another 250,000 have already left the country over the past two decades due to the rising threat of violent antisemitism, especially from radicalized Muslims transplanted from North Africa to crowded neighbourhoods in Paris, Marseilles and other large French cities. Some Jewish émigrés have opted to join the growing enclaves of French Jews in Canada, Australia or the US, but a rising number have chosen Israel as a safer location for them, including from the coronavirus threat.

Aliyah from France to Israel has remained fairly strong and stable over recent years despite the corona travel bans, and it is now expected to pick up even more as French Jews see Israel as having better job opportunities and a better record on handling the COVID-19 menace. French Aliyah is up by 137 percent in the first half of 2021, compared to the same period last year, while the number of Aliyah applications has quadrupled over the past year.

The Christian Embassy also just sponsored Aliyah flights for about 30 American Jews making the move to Israel. This will bring the total number of Jews brought by the ICEJ on Aliyah flights to Israel this year to over 1,220 from 17 countries, plus another 700 newcomers assisted via pre-Aliyah programs.

Meanwhile, the ICEJ is preparing to fund Aliyah flights for several hundred more Jews in coming months, including large groups expected from Ethiopia and India, as well as more Jews from France, the USA and elsewhere. But we need your help! So please continue to support the Aliyah efforts of the ICEJ.

DONATE TODAY AT: on.icej.org/aliyah
A group of 87 South African Jewish immigrants arrived safely in Israel in July on an emergency Aliyah flight funded by the ICEJ at the urgent request of the Jewish Agency. They had accelerated their immigration process to Israel due to the struggling economy, high unemployment, coronavirus lockdowns and recent political unrest in South Africa, which saw widespread looting in recent weeks following the arrest of a popular former leader on corruption charges (see photo at right).

The group of Olim (newcomers) were the largest Aliyah flight group from South Africa in over 25 years.

Vivienne Myburgh, National Director for ICEJ-South Africa, had the chance to say farewell to some of her Jewish countrymen before they departed the airport in Cape Town. She spoke with 91 year-old Dr. Hymie Ehrlich just before he boarded the flight to join his son and family, who made Aliyah 33 years ago. Ehrlich shared that he has visited Israel about forty times throughout his life and that “it has always been a dream” to go and live there. He was born in the Cape area in 1930 and practiced as a doctor until 2020, when at almost 90 years of age he was “instructed” to retire due to the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Danelle and Paul Datnow and their two sons, Benjamin and Jacob, were also on the flight. They had gone to Israel on a holiday in 2017 when Danelle and her husband fell in love with Israel. After talking about making Aliyah for three years, they started the process a few months ago during the lockdown period. They plan to live in Raanana, a beautiful suburb north of Tel Aviv which is popular with South African Jews.

They were all part of a group of 10 immigrants from Cape Town who met up with another 77 coming from Johannesburg, who all rendezvoused in Addis Ababa for the final overnight leg to Ben-Gurion Airport.

The Christian Embassy was extremely blessed to be able to respond on such short notice with the finances to make this urgent flight possible for all 87 of these Jewish immigrants making the journey home to Israel from South Africa. And in the coming months, we are expecting many more Jewish immigrants to be coming from South Africa, as well as from Ethiopia, India, Russia, Ukraine, France and even America, among many other lands. Most certainly, the ICEJ will be there to assist them as you enable us by supporting our many Aliyah efforts.

The call of God for the Jews to come home, and the current difficulties in many countries worldwide, is causing many Jewish people around the globe to realise that the time has come to return to their ancient homeland.

Again, planning is already underway for many more Jewish families to make Aliyah to Israel this year — including large groups from the Bnei Menashe community in India and from the Beta Israel tribes in Ethiopia. Please help us to bring them home to Zion.
I
n late July, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem welcomed another Aliyah flight bearing Jewish families making their way home to Israel. This particular plane arrived from Paris with 160 French Jewish immigrants on board, with the ICEJ sponsoring flights for 32 of these newcomers wanting to start a new life in Israel away from the rising antisemitism in France.

Some may wonder why French Jews would need help with their flights to Israel. France is perceived as a well-to-do country, and thus most French Jews ought to be able to afford the move to Israel. But the reality is that much of the old-line Ashkenazi Jewish community in France was wiped out or fled during the Holocaust. Of the 500,000 Jews left in France today, nearly three-fourths come from Sephardic Jewish families who escaped from North Africa during colonial uprisings in the 1950s and 60s. And with them came many Muslim immigrants from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, who settled alongside the Jewish refugees in the same poorer neighbourhoods of Paris, Marseilles and other French cities.

Today, many of these North African Jewish and Arab families still live side-by-side in these same crowded, working-class neighbourhoods. And over the past two decades, the Jewish families in these areas have come under the increasing threat of antisemitism, as many young French Muslims have been drawn into radical Islam.

Even in more prospering areas of France, Jews have felt under siege, especially since the terror assault on the Charlie Hebdo magazine offices and the deadly hostage stand-off at the Hyper Cache kosher supermarket in Paris in 2015. As is the case all across Europe, Jewish synagogues, day schools, museums and community centers in France have become like fortresses, with metal detectors and heavily armed guards posted outside.

As a result, nearly 250,000 Jews have left France since the year 2000, when violent protests erupted against Israel and Jews at the outset of the second Palestinian intifada. Some of these Jewish émigrés opted to join the growing French Jewish enclaves in Canada, Australia or the US, but a rising number have chosen Israel as a safer location for them. Many of those coming to Israel right now tend to be Sephardic Jews from poorer, more vulnerable neighbourhoods, and they indeed need help to cover the expenses of moving to another country. So, it is our privilege to assist them on their way home to Israel.

THE TRUTH is that most of the estimated 3.5 million Jews who have immigrated to Israel over the past 140 years have been poor and in great need of assistance. The modern-day Ingathering began in the 1880s, when Jews from southern Russia decided to flee ongoing pogroms by leaving everything behind and started walking towards Jerusalem; they knew the direction because they had always prayed facing the holy city. At about that same time, the ancient Yemenite Jewish remnant also felt a drawing back to the Promised Land and they came by foot with few possessions in hand.

This fits the vision of the last-days Ingathering of Israel proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah: “What will they answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall take refuge in it.” (Isaiah 14:32) His prophetic words have turned out to be extremely accurate.

The next great wave of Aliyah took place as Israel gained its independence in 1948. The young nation made it a priority to bring in all the beleaguered Jewish refugees from Europe who had been denied entry under the British Mandate. The focus was on the 250,000 Holocaust survivors still stuck in displacement camps across Europe. These were primarily European Jews who had lost...
everything in the Nazi Holocaust – not only their homes and wealth but their families as well. Many were left without a single living relative. Thus, a wave of penniless orphans were absorbed into an already struggling country of 660,000 people.

In his book “My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel”, journalist Ari Shavit writes about how the State of Israel was established by European Jews who were orphaned by the Holocaust. Many of their parents and grandparents sent them ahead to Palestine in the 1930s but never made it themselves. Others rebelled against their parents and travelled to Eretz Israel on their own, and never saw their parents again.

“Zionism was an orphans’ movement, a desperate crusade of Europe’s orphans”, writes Shavit. “As the unwanted sons and daughters of the Christian continent fled the hatred of their surrogate mother, they discovered they were all alone in the world... Having lost one civilisation, they had to construct another. Having lost their homeland, they had to invent another. That is why they came to Palestine, and why they now cling to the land with such desperate determination.”

These mainly Ashkenazi Jews from European backgrounds then faced a new and sudden crisis. Following Israel’s victory in the 1948 War of Independence, many Arab countries began expelling Jewish communities that had lived in their midst for over 2,000 years. In the early 1950s, more than 800,000 Sephardic and Mizrachi Jews (of Spanish and Middle Eastern origins) began flooding into Israel, many by foot. They came from Morocco all the way to Iraq, stripped of all possessions. Many had left behind large villas and lucrative businesses, only to spend the next several years living in tents.

The next major wave of aliyah came when Soviet communism collapsed, opening the door for over one million Russian-speaking Jews to come home to Israel during the 1990s. As they left their former nations, the authorities severely limited the amount of money and goods they could take with them.

When neighbours found out they were moving to Israel, no one wanted to pay anything for their homes, knowing it could be gotten on the cheap once they left. Stories abound of these Soviet Jewish Olim throwing their last few rubles and kopeks on the tarmac once they landed at Ben-Gurion Airport.

Still today, there are many Jews making Aliyah to Israel who are struggling and need help in re-starting their lives in the Land of Promise – such as the Ethiopian Jews and Bnei Menashe. This also includes even French Jews, as not all of them can afford the move abroad and rebuilding of their lives from scratch. So we are there to help, knowing that Israel, after all, is a country built by orphans and outcasts regathered from Gentile nations who had always rejected them. Indeed, “The Lord, has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall take refuge in it.” (Isaiah 14:32). 

Please support the ICEJ’s ongoing Aliyah efforts. Donate today at: on.icej.org/aliyah

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"The Lord, has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall take refuge in it.”

- Isaiah 14:32 -
Germany has a long-standing tradition for churches to hold an “Israel Sunday” one week in the annual liturgy. The tradition dates back to the early decades of the Reformation, when it was called the “Jew Sunday” and often featured antisemitic messages. It was scheduled for around Tish B’Av, the date on the Hebrew calendar when Jews commemorate the destruction of both Temples in Jerusalem. The liturgy eventually changed, especially after World War II and the Holocaust. It was renamed ‘Israel Sunday’ and now serves as a day for churches to underline God’s eternal faithfulness to the people of Israel.

This year, ICEJ-Germany national director Gottfried Bühler was asked to provide for the first time on television an ‘Israel Sunday’ service to be broadcast across Germany. This weekly service reaches up to 300,000 people and it presented a great opportunity for the Christian Embassy to share about God’s plan for Israel. ICEJ President Dr Jürgen Bühler flew to Germany for this service to preach a message on the Shema, the central prayer of Israel and the Jewish people. He was accompanied by his wife Vesna with Hebrew songs.

The location for the televised service was very special. It took place in the Mauritius Church in Reichenbach. During the Nazi era, this church was pastored by Theodor Dipper, who repeatedly spoke against Hitler in his sermons and oversaw a network of around 40 pastors of the Confessing Church who hid Jews during the Holocaust. The church compound served as a safe haven for many Jews who were hidden there, each for several days to weeks, during Hitler’s reign of terror.

Pastor Heinrich Hoffman, who serves today as the church’s pastor, said it was very appropriate to host the first televised Israel Sunday service in his church. Jürgen Bühler added that it was a tremendous privilege to preach in a location with such a legacy of heroism and of blessing God’s people.

Besides the televised service at the Mauritius Church, Jürgen and Vesna ministered in several other places during their visit to Germany, which was their first trip outside Israel since the coronavirus pandemic arose last year. This included ministering in word and song at a large Israel gathering organised by the Saxonian Friends of Israel. They also spent several days in Stuttgart at the new offices of the German branch, which has seen tremendous growth and impact in recent years under the leadership of Gottfried Bühler, Jürgen’s brother.
Significant leadership changes in several of our important national offices have been completed in recent months. These transitions to new branch leaders came after much prayer and careful planning, and with unanimous support and joy.

**Karl and Irene Klanner**

In Austria, Karl Klanner handed over his role as national director to Steven Bennett. Karl officially launched the Austrian branch only in 2004, but it quickly became one of our best performing offices. A school teacher by profession, Karl was greatly aided by his wife Irene, who handled the finances. They selflessly managed the whole operation on a volunteer basis from their home, without an office or any paid staff. When the low numbers of Evangelical Christians in Austria are taken into account, their contributions per capita were probably the highest of any national office worldwide.

**Steven and Daniela Bennet**

Steven Bennett, born in Britain, met his Austrian wife Daniela in 2006 in Tel Aviv, where they discovered their common love for the Jewish people and mutual desire to serve them. Last year, they agreed to become national directors for ICEJ-Austria. “There are many areas in which we can show comfort, love and support to the Jewish people”, said Steven.

**Hansjörg and Astrid Bischoff**

Switzerland is one of the oldest and strongest national offices in our global network, and national director Hansjörg Bischoff, along with his wife Astrid, are members of the ICEJ’s founding generation. They have served faithfully at the helm of the Swiss branch for almost four decades and earned great respect for our ministry among church leaders, the Jewish community and Israeli diplomats in their country. In 1985, they spearheaded the first Christian Zionist Congress in Basel, in the same famous Casino building where the first Zionist Congress under Theodor Herzl was held in 1897. Today, Switzerland is one of our strongest branches with contributions exceeding one million US dollars annually.

**René and Olga Emmenegger**

Hansjörg has now helped put together a new leadership team under National Director, René Emmenegger, his deputy, Dominique-Pierre Walter, and secretary Daniel Hess. René is a successful business consultant, with extensive experience in streamlining organisations and managing complex projects. With his wife Olga, they have four children. His first encounter with the ICEJ was while serving as a volunteer at the Feast of Tabernacles, which shows his humble servant attitude as he builds on the solid foundations his predecessor has laid.

**Dan Steege**

Dan has now decided to move on in his career and nominated as his successor Sarah Way, who served as Board secretary for the past three years and played a key role in establishing proper governance in the branch. She brings to the role her 15 years of experience in church leadership and an extensive background in human resources. Sarah lives with her husband and two children in Melbourne. She has a deep love for Israel, is a passionate intercessor, and a prophetically gifted leader par excellence.

**Sarah Way**

From our Jerusalem headquarters, we extend our heartfelt thanks to those leaders who are stepping aside after years of faithful service in blessing and inspiring us all. Well done! And to the new teams, we wish all success and guidance from the Holy Spirit as we serve together in this great mission to comfort Israel and the Jewish people.
The gift bags were set out and ribbons perfectly measured for tying around 120 beautiful holiday presents in anticipation of Rosh Hashanah in early September. Each gift bag contained a magnetic fridge notepad, a lovely handmade mug, specialty teas grown around Israel, and a jar of honey, thoughtfully wrapped together in a new dishtowel and finished with a ribbon and little pomegranate symbolising this special holiday season. The gifts also came with a unique card designed by ICEJ Homecare nurse Corrie van Maanen with a scripture verse from Isaiah 12:2.

Corrie soon started making her way across Israel to visit single mothers, the disabled, Holocaust survivors and others she cares for. The Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah is a highlight of the year for those under her care. “As they receive this gift of love, they know that they are remembered during this holiday time”, explained Corrie. “Many come from the former Soviet Union, where they were not allowed to celebrate the Jewish holidays.”

“This is a rich and special season, and the gift card will be treasured”, Corrie added, recalling how one lady she visits wished for a special box to store all her ICEJ Homecare cards. For her next birthday, Corrie gave her a beautiful storage box and now, whenever she feels lonely, she takes it out and reflects on all the words of encouragement she has received from Corrie over the years.

The pomegranate symbolises righteousness, knowledge and wisdom, while the honey symbolises a wish for a sweet new year. “Over this Rosh Hashanah season, this is certainly what we want to bless them with”, said Corrie.

We encourage you to get a copy of the new book “Equip” by our good friend in ministry, Peter Tsukahira. He has a global teaching ministry and is known for his clear insights into the Kingdom of God, our Christian walk, and how believers in the nations should relate to Israel. Peter has now condensed many of these biblical truths into a collection of 52 essays – one for each week of the year – to help Christians understand our need for discipleship in Christ.

Each chapter draws upon Peter’s own journey of faith and calling into ministry, providing a modern-day approach to discipleship based on the ancient paths of our Hebraic roots. His aim is that Christians today be equipped, according to Ephesians 4:11-12, to be spiritually fruitful in the end times. The book includes teachings on discipleship in the Kingdom, restoring foundational truths to the Church, the interplay between faith and works, and law and grace, and having a global vision which encompasses Israel and the nations in our day. All 52 chapters also come with discussion and prayer points, making it a great guide for weekly Bible study and prayer groups.

Peter is co-founding pastor of the Carmel Assembly near Haifa and director of the Mount Carmel School of Ministry. You will be challenged and enriched by the biblical insights and truths presented in his new book Equip.

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3. Sukkot (The Four Species - Gold)

BIBLICAL HOLIDAYS NAPKIN SET*
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2. Rosh HaShana (Happy New Year - Pomegranates)
3. Sukkot (The Four Species - Gold)

*See full item descriptions at icejstore.com

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2. Package of 24 flags for an Israeli flag cupcake
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5. Whose Land? Booklet
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