



WORD

FROM JERUSALEM



ISRAEL STILL YOUNG
AT 73!



The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was established in 1980 in recognition of the biblical significance of Jerusalem and its unique connection to the Jewish people. Today the ICEJ represents millions of Christians, churches and denominations to the nation and people of Israel. We recognise in the restoration of Israel 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 donating to the ongoing work and witness of the ICEJ.



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SCAN ME TO
BLESS ISRAEL
TODAY!



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Dear friends,

We just passed through another season of national holidays. After the recent biblical festival of Passover, Israel then commemorated *Yom HaShoah* in memory of the more than six million Jews brutally murdered during the Holocaust. The whole country came to a standstill when the nationwide siren sounded. One week later on *Yom HaZikaron*, the siren rang again when Israel honoured the 23,000 fallen soldiers who have died in various wars and terror attacks since the establishment of the state of Israel in May 1948. In ceremonies across the country, parents stood in front of the graves of their children who lost their lives defending their homeland. That same evening, seamlessly, the sober atmosphere changed into joyful celebrations of *Yom Hatzmaut*, Israel's annual Independence Day, which was observed this year on the 73rd birthday of *Medinat Israel*.

These remarkable days are not just national holidays, but they express an important part of Jewish culture – a culture of remembrance and identification. At every Passover dinner, it is recited that every Jew is to consider himself as if he had personally taken part in the Exodus. The late President Ezer Weizmann, addressing the German parliament in a remarkable speech in the 1996, said the following:

"I was a slave in Egypt. I received the Torah at Mount Sinai. Together with Joshua and Elijah, I crossed the Jordan River. I entered Jerusalem with David, was exiled from it with Zedekiah, and did not forget it by the rivers of Babylon. When the Lord returned the captives of Zion, I dreamed among the builders of its ramparts. I fought the Romans and was banished from Spain. I was bound to the stake in Mainz. I studied Torah in Yemen and lost my family in Kishinev. I was incinerated in Treblinka, rebelled in Warsaw, and emigrated to the Land of Israel, the country whence I had been exiled and where I had been born, from which I come and to which I return."

In light of these powerful words and their underlying strength, I am not concerned that Israel will forget the atrocities of the past. However, I am concerned that in the coming generations, we in the nations might forget the lessons we so need to learn from our long, tragic history of antisemitism.

Coming out of Passover, I also am reminded of how the Apostle Paul adapted this Jewish culture of remembrance and identification in his message to Gentile believers: *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life... Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:4 & 11)

Paul is telling us that each believer has walked with Christ through his death, burial and resurrection, and because of this we can expect to walk with him by faith in the fullness of his resurrection power even today! What a powerful truth that is for all of us!

With this, I want to thank you for all your prayers and support to the ICEJ, and wish you the fullest blessings from Jerusalem.

In Christ,

Jürgen Bühler

Dr Jürgen Bühler
 President
 International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

COVER PHOTO:

Israeli children hold an Israeli flag ahead of Israel's 73rd Independence Day, at a kindergarten in Moshav Yashresh, April 13, 2021. Photo by Yossi Aloni/Flash90

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“Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.”

- MATTHEW 17:11A -

THE DAYS OF ELIJAH

BY DR JÜRGEN BÜHLER • ICEJ PRESIDENT

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ELIJAH WILL COME!

For many – both Jews and Christians – Elijah is the most prominent prophet that ever ministered to Israel. Elijah is the most mentioned prophet in the New Testament. When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, he had a visitation with Moses and Elijah talking with him about “his departure” (Luke 9:31 - NASB). One of the great expectations in Judaism until this day is that Elijah would come as a forerunner of the Messiah. It is God Himself who announces through the Prophet Malachi: “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5-6). At every Passover Seder, therefore, a chair is kept open for Elijah. Thus, it was no surprise that both John the Baptist and Jesus were considered by many to be the Elijah who was to come (Luke 9:19; John 1:21).

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in the temple and announced the birth of his son (John the Baptist), he informed the stunned priest that his son would go before the Messiah “in the spirit and power of Elijah”

(Luke 1:17). And Jesus himself affirmed this ancient tradition of the coming of Elijah. When returning from the Mount of Transfiguration, his disciples asked for his opinion on this ancient Elijah tradition. Jesus responded clearly:

“JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID TO THEM, ‘INDEED, ELIJAH IS COMING FIRST AND WILL RESTORE ALL THINGS. BUT I SAY TO YOU THAT ELIJAH HAS COME ALREADY, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW HIM BUT DID TO HIM WHATEVER THEY WISHED. LIKEWISE THE SON OF MAN IS ALSO ABOUT TO SUFFER AT THEIR HANDS.’ THEN THE DISCIPLES UNDERSTOOD THAT HE SPOKE TO THEM OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.”

Matthew 17:11-13

Jesus seems to speak about two comings of Elijah, one which lies in the future “to restore

all things”, and another one in their immediate past concerning John the Baptist.

Finally, the book of Revelation speaks about two witnesses that will appear in the last days with a special end-time ministry. Their ministry as described in Revelation 11:1-14 bears the hallmarks of Elijah and Moses. They are referred to as the two lampstands and two olive trees (v. 4), an imagery that is symbolising the Church (Revelation 1:20) and in Romans 11:17ff as symbolising the one new man, consisting of an olive tree of noble and wild branches. But they can represent as well the ministry of unique individuals who will minister in Jerusalem in the power of Elijah.

But what all the above passages indicate is there will be a ministry that will manifest itself in the last days before the return of Jesus which will prepare the people for the coming of Messiah. And this ministry is needed today as much as it was needed in the times of the kings of Israel.

THE DAYS OF ELIJAH

When Elijah started his ministry in 1 Kings 17:1,



1. 'The Transfiguration of the Christ' by Pierre Paul Rubens, 1605, Museum of Fine Arts of Nancy. Wikimedia Commons

Israel had reached a pinnacle of ungodliness. It was in many ways the worst of times, not economically or politically but spiritually, regarding Israel's relation to their God.

In the years before Elijah arrived on the scene, the second great dynasty of the northern Kingdom of Israel had just been established. The preceding dynasty of Jeroboam was brought to an end after four generations because "they did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 15:34; 16:11ff). After a series of short-lived kingdoms, Omri as chief of staff rose to power and established again a stable kingdom for Israel. The Bible testifies of Omri that "he did more evil than all who were before him" (1 Kings 16:25).

When Omri died the kingdom was passed on to his son Ahab, who set a new standard of wickedness, "doing more evil in the sight of the Lord than all who were before him" (1 Kings 16:30). Not only did he exceed the rebellion of his father, but he engaged in a fatal relationship. He married into a leading political and economic power-house of the region, the house of Etbaal, or Ithobal as he is known in history books. This Phoenician clan ruled over the city state of Tyre and controlled much of the Mediterranean trade. One of the most famous trading posts they established was the ancient city of Carthage. Ithobal also united in his person not only the office of king but he also was the chief priest of Baal and Astarte in his kingdom.

Ahab might have felt it would benefit his kingdom financially and politically to marry Jezebel, the extravagant daughter of Ithobal. But what looked like a great political move opened the doors of hell in Israel. The daughter

of the king-priest and shipping tycoon not only brought a political cloud to Israel but also a cloud of wickedness and ungodliness that Ahab could not control. Jezebel appointed 400 priests of the pagan gods Baal and Astarte in Israel, established shrines for these demonic gods, and persecuted the prophets of the God of Israel. It was the darkest hour for Israel.

The ancient ways of the God of Israel still existed, but they now had powerful competitors. Old biblical traditions were scoffed at and ancient borderlines were overstepped. One of the profiteers of this ungodly rule of Ahab was Hiel of Bethel. Dismissing it as foolish talk, he defied the ancient warning of Joshua not to rebuild the city of Jericho: "Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates." (Joshua 6:26) So Hiel of Bethel was a double fool, as he rebuilt the city at the cost of his oldest and youngest sons (1 Kings 16:34).



THE GOD WHO JUDGES

According to rabbinical tradition, it was at the funeral of Hiel's youngest son when Elijah appeared. He approached the king who had attended the funeral and challenged him: "Do you see how God honours the words of his servant Joshua? How much more will He honour the words of His servant Moses who declared: "If you will not obey my words ... your heavens shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron..." (Deuteronomy 28:15, 23ff). And here the biblical account continues:

"AND ELIJAH THE TISHBITE, OF THE INHABITANTS OF GILEAD, SAID TO AHAB, 'AS THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL LIVES, BEFORE WHOM I STAND, THERE SHALL NOT BE DEW NOR RAIN THESE YEARS, EXCEPT AT MY WORD."

(1 Kings 17:1)

Here, suddenly out of nowhere, the prophet starts his mission declaring the judgement of God upon Israel. The drought that followed caused a season of unimaginable hardship on Israel. For three-and-a-half years, the sky would be cloudless and rain was withheld. From here, Elijah fled the wrath of Ahab – first to the river Cherith and then to a city called Zarephath, close to Tyre – and God provided for him.

This contains lessons for us today. First, we need to understand this initial start of Elijah's ministry in declaring judgement was not just a typical trademark of a harsh Old Testament God, yet the book of Revelation also tells us that the end-time ministry of the mysterious Two Witnesses will portray exactly this authority to withhold rain from mankind (Revelation 11:6). It should remind us that the God whom we serve is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). He does not change but is the same yesterday, today and forever! Jesus himself declared that everybody who would not repent is doomed for God's judgement (Luke 13:2-5). The cities of Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida were warned by Jesus of divine judgement because they refused to repent (Matthew 11:20ff).

11. Phoenician city of Tyre. Travelbase.com

When Peter preached his very first sermon to a gentile gathering in Cornelius' house, he made a remarkable statement. Speaking about Jesus, Peter said:

"AND HE COMMANDED US TO PREACH TO THE PEOPLE, AND TO TESTIFY THAT IT IS HE WHO WAS ORDAINED BY GOD TO BE JUDGE OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD. TO HIM ALL THE PROPHETS WITNESS THAT, THROUGH HIS NAME, WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL RECEIVE REMISSION OF SINS."

Acts 10:42ff

Peter states that Jesus explicitly instructed his disciples that he, Jesus, is both Judge and Saviour. For our secular world today, the concept that Jesus came to save us is met with derision. "Save us?" they ask, "From what?" Today's increasingly prosperous societies, with full medical care and multiple retirement funds, do not think they need to be saved and feel they are better off without the limitations of old-fashioned religion.

Unfortunately, many believers also have forgotten that Jesus came not only to give us a more joyful and meaningful life, but to save us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10). We have forgotten that without Jesus, a man is not just lacking the comfort and peace found in Him but that "the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36). They are doomed to eternal damnation.

This final judgement of God already cast a shadow in the days of Elijah. Three-and-a-half years of a God-sent drought spoiled the plans of economic growth for the people of Israel. God judged His own chosen nation.

All too often, I have heard over this past year that God definitely did not cause the coronavirus to come. God would not allow this, I have heard. While I have no divine revelation on who or what caused the COVID-19 outbreak, we do know for sure that God caused the drought in Elijah's time. It is the prophet Hosea who

calls upon Israel: "Come let us return to the Lord; He has torn us that He may heal us; He has struck us that He might bind us up." (Hosea 6:1) And of the church in Thyatira, Jesus himself rebukes "that woman Jezebel" who infiltrated the church with her immorality: "Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds." (Revelation 2:22)

Maybe God indeed uses this corona period to draw us back to Him, closer to Jesus. I am encouraged that within our own ICEJ global family, prayer has dramatically increased during the corona pandemic. A well-known pastor in Germany also told me that this past year he has been asked far more than ever to speak about the "fear of God".

THE TROUBLE OF ISRAEL

When Ahab finally met Elijah at the end of the drought, he greeted him: "Here you are, you troubler of Israel."

In our post-modern world of 'woke culture', where everything goes and no absolutes are allowed, it is the believer in the holy God of the Bible who is the modern trouble-maker. A God who places radical demands upon His disciples is not compatible anymore with a world which defies absolutes and celebrates "openness," "diversity," and "inclusion." But it is in exactly this time that Elijah's voice needs to be heard again.

A MINISTRY OF POWER

To be clear, Elijah's main calling was not to release judgement upon Israel, but it was the means to turn the hearts of his people back to her God. Elijah's ministry – and after him that of Elisha (upon whom rested the spirit of Elijah) – brought forth one of the greatest seasons of signs and wonders in Israel. It was later only exceeded by the Messiah himself.

Both Elijah and Elisha demonstrated the miraculous power of God more than any other prophet before or after them. They raised the dead, healed the sick, defied laws of gravity, divided the river Jordan, multiplied food, blinded the eyes of the enemies, and opened the eyes of God's people. It was a singular time when God revealed Himself to His people in

unparalleled ways. This was not a ministry of 'cheap grace', but one where God challenged His people to make up their minds whom they wanted to serve – the God of Israel or Baal.

Jesus then announces that Elijah will come and he will "restore all things". When Jesus said these words, I believe he did not have the Roman or Babylonian empires in mind, but his own people, the people of the Kingdom of God. This means we can expect – even in the midst of turbulent times – for God to conclude His purposes with Israel and the Church!

THE GOD BEFORE WHOM I STAND

One last point... We might ask ourselves: What was the secret behind Elijah's power and ministry. Elijah himself reveals it to us in the very first words he utters to King Ahab: "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand..."

In Elijah, we meet a man who took his stand before God. He carried out his ministry from out of the presence of God. His words were not formed by the theological schools of his days, nor by the great orators, but they came straight from the throne of God where Elijah took his stand.

And here lies the challenge for us all. The times in which we live need people who will stand before God. People who will respond to the call of Jesus from Gethsemane: "Can't you watch with me for one hour?" We need to remind ourselves that all the great revivals were birthed by prayer. Azusa Street had a praying William Seymour; the Welsh revival had the prayers of Robert Evans; and the revival of the Hebrides was birthed by the prayers of two elderly women.

Our world today urgently needs people who can say "as the Lord lives before whom I stand!" In a time when millions of babies are being sacrificed on the altar of prosperity, family values are being trampled upon, and both Israel and the Church are being marginalised – we are encouraged to have hope. As the world seemingly grows darker, Jesus encourages us that he will build his Church. And as we take our stand before him, the gates of hell shall not overcome us, but rather he wants to empower us for a ministry in the spirit of Elijah. 🌍

STAND UP FOR ISRAEL AT THE ICC JOIN THE ICEJ PETITION!

The International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague has an important role to play in world affairs, to fairly and independently guard against impunity for war crimes, genocide, and other atrocities which “shock the conscience of humanity.” However, the ICC has recently diverted from this mission by opening an official probe against Israel for alleged war crimes committed during and since the 2014 rocket war with Hamas in Gaza, as well as Israel’s actions to build and maintain Jewish communities in the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem.

In response, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has launched a global petition which allows you to express your opposition to this ICC war crimes probe against Israel. The results of this petition will be presented to the member states of the ICC as well as the judges and prosecutor of the Court.

BACKGROUND

The ICC made a highly politicised decision to investigate Israel for war crimes, basing the move on spurious claims and in the process, it has unlawfully expanded the Court’s jurisdiction. The probe was prompted by an overzealous Chief Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, who harbours bias against the Jewish state, as seen in her extensive private consultations with Palestinian Authority officials on this matter over recent years.

The Palestinians, in turn, are seeking to exploit the Court to deprive Israel of its right of self-defence, while also criminalising the legitimate rights of Jews to live in peace and security in their ancient homeland.

Therefore, this probe against Israel must be opposed by all those concerned with fairness and justice in world affairs. Christians especially have an historic, moral duty to stand up against such discriminatory actions against Israel.

MAKING THE CASE

The ICC is considered a ‘court of last resort’ which can only exercise jurisdiction over criminal cases expressly assigned to it by the Rome Statute, its signatory member states, or the United Nations Security Council. Thus, its current actions against Israel are improper and flawed for several reasons:

- 1 Israel is not a signatory to the Rome Statute governing the ICC, has not consented to the Court’s jurisdiction in this matter, and has its own long-established and respected judicial system for investigating and trying such crimes.
- 2 The Palestinians do not qualify as a sovereign state under the Rome Statute, and under the Oslo Accords they have no authority to assert or confer criminal jurisdiction over Israelis in the West Bank and Gaza.
- 3 Therefore, the Court has no legal standing or authority to investigate and indict Israelis for war crimes in the ‘occupied territories’ – a view held by numerous Western democratic states and international legal scholars.
- 4 The ICC’s Chief Prosecutor, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, has exhibited bias against Israel through her extensive and secretive consultations with Palestinian Authority officials on this matter since 2015. This bias is further evidenced by her dating the period for the formal probe back to 13 June 2014 – the day after three Israeli teenage boys were kidnapped and murdered by Hamas – thus deliberately focusing on Israel’s response to a heinous crime and not the original crime itself committed by Palestinians.
- 5 In the Oslo Accords signed with Israel, the Palestinians expressly agreed that they have no criminal jurisdiction over Israelis in the West Bank, Gaza and eastern Jerusalem, which also means they have no authority to delegate that criminal jurisdiction to another body. Thus, the ICC itself is flouting the Oslo agreements and undercutting this critical source of stability for the region.
- 6 The ICC is sullyng its impartiality and prestige while also weakening the prospects for peace in the region by unlawfully intervening in a bilateral political dispute on the side of the Palestinians, right when Israel has made historic advances in peace and normalisation with several Arab nations.



Cour
Pénale
Internationale
International
Criminal
Court

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CALL TO ACTION

You can help reverse this illicit and unjust war crimes probe against Israel by signing our petition to the International Criminal Court.

SIGN THE PETITION TODAY AT:
on.icej.org/iccpetition

FOURTH ISRAELI ELECTIONS STILL A DRAW

BY DAVID R. PARSONS,
VP AND SENIOR SPOKESMAN

When Israelis voted in late March in their fourth national elections of the past two years, the results were closer than ever. Once again, the Center/Left failed to win enough Knesset seats to oust long-time Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But he also lacks enough mandates so far to form a stable coalition. Netanyahu may get there over coming weeks, but the political drama likely will go right down to crunch time before an unthinkable fifth election is triggered.

Somehow, Netanyahu has managed to stay in office for more than a decade now, despite numerous determined attempts to unseat him. But the key to whether Netanyahu can stay in power this time lies within his own nationalist camp, perhaps with the cooperation of a maverick Arab party.

The election campaign wound down just as the nation was emerging from an extended corona lockdown, thanks to the Netanyahu government's very ambitious mass vaccination program. With almost 90% of all Israeli adults now vaccinated, everyone was hoping for life to return to normal and for the economy to recover. This gave Netanyahu a last-minute boost which kept his chances alive to retain the premiership. But he also is facing the dilemma that too many party leaders from his own Center/Right – namely Naftali Bennett of Yamina, Gideon Sa'ar of New Hope, and Avigdor Liberman of Yisrael Beiteinu – are wanting to drive him from office.

WHAT WAS AT STAKE?

Israel's traditional political fault-line of hawks vs doves has been increasingly irrelevant over these last four elections, taking a back seat to the simple question 'Bibi or not Bibi.'



Naftali Bennett and Benjamin Netanyahu in friendlier times (AFP).

The peaceniks are still losing ground to the nationalist camp, but Netanyahu has been hemorrhaging support even among his own conservative base. Liberman abandoned his former ally in the last election, and Sa'ar just broke away from Likud to form New Hope on a promise to finally replace Netanyahu with a new prime minister. This has left Bennett in the critical position of deciding if Bibi stays put or not. Yet even with Bennett's support, Netanyahu still would only have the backing of 59 Knesset members, two short of the 61 majority needed to approve a government.

WHAT IS THEIR BEEF WITH BIBI?

Many here contend that Israeli democracy was actually at stake in this election, due to their perception of Netanyahu as corrupt, self-serving, and privileged. Fueled by the three corruption trials now underway against him, the drive to oust Netanyahu has become relentless. The "Black Flag" movement has staged weekly peaceful protests across the country for an entire year – despite corona lockdowns and stormy winter weather. Even younger rivals on the Right, such as Bennett and Sa'ar, jumped onto the anti-Bibi bandwagon, perhaps exploiting the growing sentiment against him to accelerate their own political rise.

BIBI'S REBUTTAL

This all ignores Netanyahu's many lasting contributions to the country, such as his economic success in marketing Israel as the Start-Up Nation; his adept handling of Israel's many security challenges, including the Iranian nuclear threat; his bold pro-active response

to the coronavirus threat; and his many diplomatic achievements, such as the recent Abraham Accords.

NEW GOVERNMENT OR MORE ELECTIONS?

For the first time in Israel's modern history, the Arab parties are a key factor in the post-election jockeying to form a coalition government. The main Arab party, the Joint List, is still refusing to join a Netanyahu-led coalition. But the small breakaway Ra'am – an Islamist faction led by Mansour Abbas – is taking a more pragmatic line, saying their top priority is to secure advances for the Arab sector. Thus, they could provide Netanyahu with the few extra Knesset seats he needs to form a government, perhaps as a coalition partner from outside the cabinet.

The problem is that the far-Right Religious Zionism faction is refusing to join a government which relies on outside support from Arab MKs. Mansour Abbas is saying all the right things to ease their concerns, promising to work for Jewish-Arab coexistence in Israel "based on mutual respect and genuine equality." But it may never be enough for the implacable anti-Arab fringe on the Right.

Another option is for Netanyahu to pry a couple of defectors loose from Sa'ar or Liberman to join a Right-leaning government. There also is a slight chance Bennett will eventually team up with Lapid in a power-sharing deal. Otherwise, the alternative is going to yet a fifth election. The pressure to avoid that dreaded outcome will certainly grow, and odds are someone will eventually flinch and break the logjam. 🌐

NO STOPPING THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS

BY DAVID R. PARSONS

The series of normalisation agreements which Israel recently signed with four Arab nations – known collectively as the ‘Abraham Accords’ – continue to bear fruit for Israel despite several diplomatic hiccups with Sunni Arab leaders and the lack of interest shown by the new Biden administration in Washington.

Over recent months, Israeli officials, businessmen and tourists have been eager to explore the newly minted relations between the Jewish state and the Arab nations of Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. Morocco and the UAE are especially keen to welcome Israeli tourists and shoppers, while wealthy Emiratis are lining up to invest in Israeli start-up companies. One report revealed that a group of Emirati investors are set to sink \$10 billion into Israel’s energy, manufacturing, water, space, healthcare and agri-tech sectors. Meantime, Bahrain named its ambassador to Tel Aviv, while Sudan cancelled its boycott of Israel. For its part, Israel is hoping to host increasing numbers of Arab and Muslim pilgrims coming to see Jerusalem’s Islamic shrines once the corona travel bans are eased.

Nevertheless, there have been a couple speed bumps along the way. For instance, UAE officials deferred on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s request to pay an historic visit to Dubai in early March because they reportedly did not want the Abraham Accords to be used as a campaign issue in the Israeli elections.

Netanyahu’s route to Dubai also was blocked when Jordan refused to allow his plane to use Jordanian airspace on the way. The move was seen as retaliation for Israel’s demand that Jordan’s Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah reduce the size of his large security detail ahead of a planned visit to Jerusalem.

BIDEN BRAKES

Another possible drag on the burgeoning relations is the disinterest of the Biden administration in promoting the deals. In fact, State Department officials are refusing to even use the term “Abraham Accords”, likely because of its close association to former president Donald Trump. Instead, they prefer to speak of building on the recent “normalisation agreements”, even as they undermine them by coaxing Iran into a revived nuclear pact. One commentator even claimed it was Washington which insisted the UAE not welcome Netanyahu for a pre-election visit.

Ironically, the Biden team’s return to a policy of courting Iran is doing more to drive the Sunni Arab bloc closer to Israel than if the current White House were openly begging the Arabs to make peace with the Jewish state. Combine that with Israel’s stepped-up regional shadow war with Tehran, and the momentum of the Abraham Accords appears sure to continue bearing fruit – both in public and private.

PEACE BETWEEN PEOPLE

The people-to-people contacts spawned by the Abraham Accords are perhaps their most promising facet so far. Israelis longed for warmer relations with ordinary Egyptians and Jordanians but were kept at bay by the rejectionist elites in Cairo and Amman. The Emiratis, however, have been quick to embrace Israeli visitors.

The pro-peace UAE-based group Sharaka, after hosting a successful get-acquainted webinar in January for Israeli and Arab businessmen, held a ground-breaking online gathering on Yom HaShoah in April to mark Israel’s annual Holocaust Remembrance Day. Arab leaders and activists from throughout the Middle East openly lamented the lack of Holocaust education in the region and vowed to change that.

In another positive sign, the national rugby teams of Israel and the UAE played their first-ever friendly match in March to honour the Abraham Accords.



The Israeli and UAE national rugby teams played their first-ever friendly match in Dubai in March.

Another possible sign of progress is that for the first time, an Arab party in the Israeli Knesset is seriously considering to join a government coalition – at least by providing outside support. Some analysts see it as an indication that Israeli Arabs are finally starting to ponder why they should remain hostile towards their own country when other Arabs in the region are befriending Israel and reaping the benefits.

Meantime, many Arab Christians have been watching these developments in hopes they could have a positive spiritual impact on the region, according to Tom Craig, the ICEJ’s Middle East coordinator.

“We certainly are experiencing a paradigm shift in the region. As these Arab nations are willing to normalise relations with Israel, its opening up the whole idea of cultural exchange, commerce, and various ways to build relationships”, Craig says. “Even in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, there are opportunities for Christian outreach now that were not there before. In many of the Evangelical prayer houses in the region, we are seeing greater faith and boldness about expressing God’s plans for their nations and Israel.”

A FRUITFUL SEASON OF ALIAH

BY ANASTASIYA GOODING

The year 2021 is quickly turning into one of our most fruitful seasons of Aliyah ever, as the ICEJ has already sponsored flights for over 880 Jewish immigrants since January. This includes a group of 302 Ethiopian Jews who landed in February, a flight with 226 Jewish immigrants from across the former Soviet Union who came in March, and then a third flight with 102 olim (newcomers) from Kazakhstan who just arrived in April.

This is remarkable when you consider it has happened during a time of corona lockdowns and travel bans, including the first-ever closure of Ben-Gurion Airport. But thankfully, they have been able to make the journey home to Israel on 'rescue flights' arranged by The Jewish Agency for Israel and sponsored by the ICEJ.

Many of these new arrivals were planning to make Aliyah last year, but were delayed by lockdowns in Israel. Some had already sold their homes and quit their jobs but were left in limbo when Ben-Gurion was completely shut down in January and February. Yet the skies are now opening back up, and the ICEJ is in a position to help bring home an expected surge in Aliyah to Israel.

Many of the Russian-speaking immigrants also needed lengthy connecting flights, traversing up to eight time zones from across the former Soviet republics, before boarding the final four-hour flight to Tel Aviv.

Among the 226 Jews who arrived in March were Ksenia and her daughter Emilia. They came all the way from Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan, and will be settling into a kibbutz in the Negev desert as part of the "first home in the homeland" program. Ksenia has a master's degree in land use engineering and hopes to see the Negev bloom.

Ksenia has always dreamed of making Aliyah but every time she tried, she constantly ran into delays. Last year, amidst the corona pandemic,



A grateful Jewish family on their way from Kazakhstan to Israel in April.

her mother and younger sister managed to arrive in Israel, which motivated Ksenia to finally make it to Israel as well. After making all the needed preparations, Ksenia and Emilia were scheduled to come in November, but then Ben-Gurion Airport went into lockdown and they were forced to wait once more.

With no hope in sight, they became discouraged until they heard the amazing news that a 'rescue flight' was scheduled to leave from Moscow on March 15. After much perseverance, Ksenia and her daughter finally reached their new home in Israel.

The Christian Embassy has now supported Aliyah flights for over 880 Jewish immigrants since the start of 2021, including some 502 Ethiopian Jews as part of "Operation Rock of Israel." Most of these Ethiopian immigrants



Ksenia and Emilia were determined to reach Israel

waited for several decades in transit camps to be reunited with their families in Israel. In making Aliyah, they are answering an ancient biblical call to return to their homeland which has carried down through many generations, and the ICEJ is thrilled to take an active part in this prophetic mission.

"Supporting Aliyah is one of the core missions of the Christian Embassy, and this season of the corona pandemic has actually been one of the most critical phases of our four decades of involvement in bringing Jews back to their homeland", said ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler. "Indeed, corona has given added meaning to the calling of Israel to be a 'safe haven' for the Jewish people."

There are still thousands of Jews waiting to make the move to Israel. Interest in Aliyah is dramatically on the rise, as many Jewish families worldwide now view Israel as safer health-wise and better positioned for economic recovery than other countries. Israeli and Jewish Agency officials anticipate up to 250,000 new Jewish immigrants to arrive over the next three to five years.

Since we were founded in 1980, the ICEJ has assisted more than 160,000 Jewish immigrants to return to Israel from all around the world, and this is a work which is continuing to expand in 2021. Please help us bring more Jews home to Israel in the days ahead by supporting the ICEJ's many Aliyah efforts. 🌍

DONATE TODAY AT:
on.icej.org/alyah



MEET THE ADDIS FAMILY

BY ESTER HEINZMANN, ICEJ-GERMANY

As Aliyah continues, we want to acquaint you with some touching life stories of the new Jewish immigrants making the journey to Israel, starting with the Addis family from Ethiopia.

It has been 20 years since Yaliganesh last saw her mother Nana. Back then, Nana and her three sons left their home village of Gojam and moved to Gondar to await permission to immigrate to Israel. Nana's other four children, including Yaliganesh, remained in Gojam, with some preparing for marriage. After waiting nine years in Gondar, Nana finally received permission to make Aliyah. "We were so happy", her son Kafale remembers.

But then they received bad news: only the mother and three sons could come to Israel. "They told us: 'You go now, and once you're in Israel, the others will follow'", Kafale remembers.

In the years that followed, three more siblings were able to make Aliyah, but not Yaliganesh. "I cried so much when they left for Israel and today, ten years later, I am still crying", she says. "I couldn't even say goodbye to them."

Her entire family has suffered from the separation. "My mother is totally devastated", says Kafale. "For 20 years she has been separated from her daughter. She's never seen her four grandchildren."

As a young man, Kafale tried to help Yaliganesh make it to Israel. After his military service in the IDF paratroopers, he travelled to Gondar and was shaken by the conditions his sister faced in the transit camps. He found Yaliganesh living in a small mud hut, with no electricity or running water – like most Jews in Gondar. For years, Yaliganesh stored away her few belongings in suitcases – always ready for her journey to Israel.

Last November, Yaliganesh finally received permission to make Aliyah. "I will be so happy to see my family again. It feels like a dream," she smiled.

Her family in Israel also was excited. "At last, the time has come. After 20 years of tears, we can embrace her and let out all this longing", said a relieved Kafale.

In December 2020, Yaliganesh and her family arrived in Israel on an ICEJ-sponsored flight, and she was finally able to hug her mother Nana! 🌍

MEET THE SHALAEV FAMILY

BY ANASTASIYA GOODING

Leonid Shalaev, along with his wife and two children, arrived in Israel on a 'rescue flight' sponsored by the ICEJ on March 15. Leonid's arrival was marked by a long-awaited reunion with his brother, who had already made Aliyah to Israel.

Leonid was born into a family who had lived for several generations in Kamchatka, in the Far East of Russia – a long 5,600 miles distance from the Promised Land. As a young man, he moved to southwest Russia to study at the Polytechnic University. There, he met and fell in love with Irina, who became his wife. The young couple decided to move back east to Vladivostok, a port city on the Sea of Japan. They soon welcomed the birth of a son, Savely, and daughter, Polina. Yet despite now having a family, Leonid was not ready to settle down in the Far East.

"We had a dream to live in a warm climate. I also always dreamed of becoming a computer programmer. And I really missed my brother, who now lived in Israel", Leonid shared. "Israel makes all dreams come true!"

From then on, Leonid started pursuing his dream to reach Israel. He and his wife began to study Hebrew. He also prepared for the entrance exam to Tel Ran, a computer programming school in Israel, and was accepted last August.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly, and in November 2020 the Shalaev family received their entry visas to Israel. But then Ben-Gurion Airport was completely shut down for the first time in its history. "This was such a disappointment, and we didn't know what to do," recounted Leonid. "We had already quit our jobs and sold our apartment."

"And then, we got the best news ever that we would fly with the whole family to our dream – our new home in Israel!"

This door suddenly opened when the ICEJ stepped in to sponsor a 'rescue flight' for 226 Jewish immigrants from across the former Soviet Union, including the Shalaev family.

"Thanks to all those who helped make this flight happen! Many thanks to you all," said Leonid. 🌍





Holocaust survivors enjoy the first concert at the Haifa Home post-lockdowns.

HAIFA HOME RESIDENTS GLAD TO COME TOGETHER AGAIN

BY ICEJ STAFF

In the last week of February, the community dining hall at the ICEJ's Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors was re-opened. After a year of eating separately at home due to corona health rules, the day finally arrived that everyone had waited for so long. The dining room was buzzing with the sounds of happy voices; people greeting each other with excitement and elation at the fact that they could enjoy dining together again. Having to dress up and walk to the dining room and see the smiling familiar faces of friends, adds to making happier and healthier residents.



Haifa Home residents are able to eat together again.

Only those residents who had received their full doses of vaccinations were allowed into the room, which was almost everyone. Then, at the

beginning of March, we also started to serve the evening meal in the dining hall. Residents were overjoyed at the new look of the room, as we were able to buy new dining chairs that are much more comfortable for our aging residents and which also give some colour to the hall.

PESACH WITH DIGNITY

The *Pesach* celebration, which marks Israel's redemption from slavery in Egypt and freedom to serve God, had an additional meaning this year. Unlike last year, this year families and friends could again gather around the Passover Seder table. Sadly though, many Holocaust survivors are home-bound and do not have family to go celebrate this important festival with.

Recognising this need, the ICEJ joined hands with an initiative called: "*Pesach with Dignity*". Five top Israeli chefs gave of their time and brought their co-workers along to cook a gourmet meal in a large kitchen at a hotel in Tel Aviv.

"I'm always trying to join a project that reaches out to those in need", said top Israeli chef Benny Bezza. "This year it is an honour to be part of

this wonderful initiative. We will work as long as it takes so that thousands of people will be able to enjoy a nice meal during Pesach."



Yudit Setz with Israeli top chef Benny Bezza.

Volunteers from all walks of life helped to distribute the delicious meals to the homes of Holocaust survivors all over Israel. At least 1,000 survivors enjoyed a delicious, cooked meal this Pesach through this special project.

RESIDENTS BECOME CELEBS

A film crew from Israeli TV or Reuters or some other media outlet is a fairly common sight at the Haifa Home. Yet just before Israel's annual Holocaust Memorial Day on the 8th of April, there was a rush of TV channels and journalists visiting the Home to hear stories from the

residents about their lives and to catch a glimpse of their daily life in the Home.

These stories were then featured on television and in newspapers in a very special way on *Yom HaShoah*. For instance, the Israeli daily newspaper *Ha'aretz* published an especially warm article entitled "German volunteers in Israel find themselves 'welcomed and even loved' by Holocaust survivors". Referring to the ICEJ's three German Christian volunteers serving at the Home (Debora Wanner, Natalia Ochs and Kerstin Hoffman), the report quoted survivors as expressing deep appreciation for their love and care.



"I am happy I can speak to her, not everyone knows German", 93-year-old Sophie Leibowitz told *Ha'aretz* about her German Christian nurse Natalia Ochs. "They are not guilty of anything. It was their parents or grandparents. It's been almost 80 years. We're already past that here in Israel... We don't think about their religion. We need their help, and they help us."

Meanwhile, another survivor, 92-year-old Fanny Zelekovic, said of Debora Wanner: "She is like family, like a sister. She has a heart of gold."

When asked what she thought of all the media attention, resident Naomi answered: "It is not that I am in any way looking for media attention for myself, but I feel it as my obligation to share my story. We are the last that have gone through it and can give witness."

A film crew from *Channel 13* in Israel also came to film segments for a special two-hour telethon held to raise money for the Haifa Home. For the occasion, Vesna Bühler was on hand to give the first concert in the Home since Covid-19 hit the country. Being together and hearing the sound of beautiful music was like a balm to the souls of our residents. After the concert, they expressed their thanks to Vesna and her

husband, ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler, for being there. They also shared their hearts about the difficult year we had all passed through and the blessing our ICEJ team has been for them.

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

It is sad to see the numbers dwindling of the remaining community of Holocaust survivors in Israel. In the past year since Israel's Holocaust Memorial Day in 2020, records show that 14,264 registered Holocaust survivors have died. That is about 41 who die every day. Presently, 31,000 are older than 90 years old and more than 900 are over 100 years in age. Roughly 25% live under the poverty line.

We still have the privilege of knowing them and taking care of some of them.

Our Haifa Home residents are invited to many different places to talk about their past during this time of remembering the Holocaust. Even though it is very difficult to share about the trauma in their lives, it weighs heavily on their shoulders, knowing that they are the last witnesses. "If we do not do it, who will remember?" Mordechai, a survivor from Poland, recently exclaimed.

The heaviness on *Yom HaShoah*, Israel's annual Holocaust Remembrance Day, is tangible in the air. At 10:00 AM, the siren is heard all over Israel and the nation pauses and stands to remember the six million Jews who perished in the Nazi genocide. It is a very difficult day for the survivors, but as Sofie – a survivor from Transnistria – said: "It's like we go to visit the grave of our parents, who perished. It is a time to be together and to remember. We need it."



On *Yom HaShoah* this year, a solemn ceremony was held once again in the street outside our Haifa Home and those attending included hundreds of local survivors and their families, as well as Israeli cabinet minister Eli Cohen,

Members of the Knesset, dignitaries from Haifa, and many soldiers and police.



Yudit Setz, ICEJ coordinator at the Haifa Home, was invited to be the first speaker and she spoke to the heart of the survivors with words of embrace on this difficult day.

"I know that even after about 80 years, the pain of loss is still very deep every day with you. Thank you so much for sharing your story these past few days on TV, radio, for school classes and army units. I know how hard it is for you. You are our last witnesses, and the next generations need to hear and learn from you in order to appreciate this beautiful country even more and protect it.... As ICEJ we will continue to stand with you and take care of you. We will continue to teach the next generations about the Holocaust and the lessons from it, so we can stand for what is right and fight against the growing antisemitism. May God help us all."

After the ceremony, our residents engaged with groups of IDF soldiers. Naomi, a survivor from Romania, said: "It so helps us, all this attention. It makes this difficult day easier, so we don't have to sit alone with our memories at home behind the TV."

Please help support the ICEJ's continuing hands-on work and care for Holocaust survivors in Israel. 🇮🇱

GIVE TODAY AT:
on.icej.org/survivors

ICEJ ENABLES DRUZE TEACHERS TO CONTINUE NURTURING DREAMS

BY LAURINA DRIESSE

Zooms and online teaching are par-for-the-course these days, but how can a teacher educate online without the proper tools?

Recently, the ICEJ responded to a request to supply teaching equipment to a Druze school in the Israeli town of Usifiya, situated near Haifa in northern Israel. This town was inhabited by the Druze in the early 18th century and today is still 77% Druze.



Answering a need for a traditional religious school in this Druze community, a special school in Usifiya opened seven years ago with 105 students. Today it has expanded to its maximum capacity of 400 students, and boys and girls learn in separate classes. The students are extremely dedicated and eager to achieve. This is evident in the fact that they accomplished some of the highest marks in their matriculation examinations in the country, making their teachers very proud!

Showing motherly love towards her students, school principal Nuwal focuses strongly on building good relationships with the students

and tries to instill good values. She teaches them to appreciate those who are different from themselves and encourages them to give back to their community and country. Speaking from the heart, Nuwal shared her desire to prepare her young students – particularly the girls – to continue their studies and successfully complete academic degrees in professions of their interest, like medicine, business and high tech.

Despite the academic successes enjoyed by the school, it was evident to the ICEJ AID team on a recent visit that the school could use some extra assistance to upgrade the learning environment. Over the past year, as Israelis faced extended coronavirus lockdown periods, the teachers at this school found themselves in an extremely challenging situation. Online classes were expected, but a lack of proper equipment prevented them from teaching effectively online. When the ICEJ received their urgent plea for assistance, without hesitation we stepped in to meet the need.

“Thanks to our wonderful British friends, the ICEJ-UK branch gave an incredible gift which enabled us to supply seven sets of projectors, screens, speakers and five laptop computers for the teachers to use in the classrooms,” remarked Nicole Yoder, ICEJ Vice President for AID and Aliyah.

The AID team also had the opportunity to meet two of the students, who thanked the ICEJ for helping them continue their studies even in these difficult times of corona.

“We could see that the students love their school and were happy to be remembered and assisted by Christians from around the world who don’t know them personally, but opened their hearts to help them, nonetheless”, said Nicole. “Naturally, this donation came as a great reinforcement of the valuable lessons of ‘giving and accepting others’ that no doubt will be utilized by the teachers in the future!”

The principal Nuwal and her faculty of teachers warmly welcomed the ICEJ with incomparable Druze hospitality when the AID team came to dedicate the educational tools. “We are so thankful for the investment that you have made in our students”, enthused Nuwal.

While nurturing the students’ dreams, Nuwal has a big dream of her own; she hopes that one day they will be able to move to a bigger and newer school so they can accept some 300 additional students who they currently are unable to accommodate.

Through your faithful giving, the ICEJ can continue to support and lift all sectors of Israeli society. Ahead of the new school year, the ICEJ also will provide academic sponsorships to Druze students, so that their hopes and dreams currently being nurtured and instilled by teachers like Nuwal and her team can be fulfilled.

Thank you for making an impact in the lives of these Israeli Druze students. Please continue to support the work of the ICEJ. 🌍

DONATE TODAY AT:
on.icej.org/aid
OR SCAN THE CODE



KEEPING HOPE ALIVE FOR ISRAELI ARABS

BY LAURINA DRIESSE

Several ICEJ staff recently packed a generous variety of food items into 164 care packages earmarked as gifts for Israeli Arab families struggling due to the coronavirus crisis. The ICEJ AID team then drove all around Israel - from Jerusalem to Nazareth and back to Bethlehem - to meet with local Arab pastors and coordinate delivery of the food packages to desperate families.

“One Arab pastor in Jerusalem was so encouraged by our support at this time”, said AID assistant Jannie Tolhoek. “After a year of dwindling attendance in his church, the ICEJ food packages for families in his congregation meant he had a way to help them in difficult times, and to invite them back to church.”

In Nazareth, Nicole Yoder, ICEJ Vice President for AID and Aliyah, felt so humbled as she

recalled the encounters with each family and their warm hospitality. “We came with a gift but didn’t go away without being offered something in return”, she commented. “The most precious part though was our prayer time together.”

Heading to Bethlehem, the AID team met with Pastor Naim Khoury, who shared about his 42 difficult days in hospital with COVID-19 and his miraculous recovery. The AID team was invited to a special church service giving thanks for his recovery, followed by our AID team handing out the care packages to needy Arab families.

ICEJ Staff relax after packing hundreds of Passover gift packages.



HIDDEN SMILES COME TO LIFE AT PASSOVER

BY LAURINA DRIESSE

Just before Passover in March, huge boxes with holiday supplies arrived at the ICEJ headquarters in Jerusalem. Nicole Yoder, ICEJ VP for AID and Aliyah, oversaw the staff's effort to sort the contents into hundreds of Passover gift bags. Within hours, a sea of blue ICEJ gift bags filled the large assembly room. Each one contained a sparkling new cooking pot and dish towels, accompanied by a Passover greeting card with a food voucher, so those desperately in need could cook their Passover Seder meal.

The AID department's jam-packed vehicle then started out to deliver gift packages across Israel. Clocking hundreds of kilometers, the AID team drove between Jerusalem and Ashdod, Beit Shean, Kiryat Gat, Netanya and other Israeli towns. Working together with local Israeli social workers to identify those in dire straits, they brought the gift bags and food vouchers to dozens of homes or central delivery points.

While delivering the gift bags in Ashdod, Jannie Tolhoek of our AID team came across Esti, living in a run-down building. She is a single mother of five grown-up children – two of whom are disabled. Grabbing Jannie's hand to express her gratitude, Esti said: "Thank you for coming, thank

you for thinking of me. This year Pesach will be special, because I know that you gave us food on the table!"

The next visit was with Yitzhak, who wept while showing Jannie and his social worker, Ram, the mouldy, broken cupboards about to fall off his kitchen wall. Ram noted that requests for Passover help more than doubled compared to last year due to corona. Yet, the faces of each family had big smiles as they received the holiday gifts and food vouchers given on behalf of Christians around the world.

The economic challenges have not spared local congregations either, so together with Pastor Birlie Belay we also gave Passover assistance to Ethiopian Jews in need. "The Christian Embassy is our family. You look after and support us," assured Pastor Belay. 🌍

Through your generous donations, you too can be a part of bringing hidden smiles to light for needy Israeli families!

PLEASE GIVE TODAY AT: on.icej.org/aid

In nearby Efrat, the AID team was warmly greeted by legendary Rabbi Shlomo Riskin. Together, they distributed food care packages to fourteen local Arab families whose members work at a religious school in the Jewish community.

All the care packages were accompanied by the message that Christians worldwide care for these Arab believers living in the Land of Israel. Thank you for making it possible for us to support so many struggling families, as we reach out to all sectors of Israeli society in these challenging times. 🌍





ICEJ JOINS ISRAEL IN MARKING 'YOM HASHOAH'

In early April, Israel marked *Yom HaShoah* – the nation's annual Holocaust Remembrance Day in honour of the over six million Jews who were systematically murdered in the Nazi genocide from 1939 to 1945. The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem joined in the observances in a variety of ways.

At the official wreath-laying ceremony in Warsaw Ghetto Square at Yad Vashem, the Christian Embassy was represented by Corrie van Maanen, who just completed 25 years of service on our staff. Corrie laid a wreath on behalf of the ICEJ and the Christian Friends of Yad Vashem, while also standing in for the many elderly Russian Jewish immigrants she visits as part of ICEJ Homecare, many of whom are Holocaust survivors who lost family in the Nazi genocide. The ceremony also was attended by Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and other Israeli officials.

A moving Yom HaShoah ceremony also was held at the ICEJ's Home for Holocaust survivors in Haifa, where Yudit Setz addressed the large gathering of Israeli dignitaries, survivors and their families, police, soldiers and other guests (see pages 12-13).

The day before Yom HaShoah, the ICEJ also took part in a special two-hour telethon broadcast on Israel TV Channel 13 to raise funds for our Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors. The program featured testimonies by survivors residing at our special assisted-living home as well as songs performed by well-known Israeli musical artists. The telethon raised over NIS 4 million shekels (\$1.2 million) from Israeli donors to help support the Haifa Home, which is also supported by Christian donors worldwide through the ICEJ. Support this worthy project at: on.icej.org/survivors

ICEJ PRESENT AS KOSOVO OPENS EMBASSY IN JERUSALEM

BY MOJMIR KALLUS, VP FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

In March, the Republic of Kosovo became the first European and first Muslim-majority country to establish its Embassy in Jerusalem. Besides the recent Abraham Accords, which opened the way for four new Arab countries to recognise Israel, this is yet more fruit of the foreign policy efforts of former US President Donald Trump. Last year, Trump brokered a deal between Israel, Serbia and Kosovo that included mutual recognition between Israel and Kosovo and the establishment of embassies in Jerusalem.

While not all points of the agreement have been implemented yet, Kosovo made good on its promise by officially opening an Embassy in downtown Jerusalem on 15 March. The ceremony was hosted by current chargé d' affaires Ines Demiri (pictured) and was attended by senior officials from Israel's Foreign Ministry, Jerusalem city officials, and by ICEJ vice presidents David Parsons and Barry Denison. The connection to this special event had been created for us by the ICEJ team in Kosovo.

Two years ago, the ICEJ established a representation in Kosovo, led by Driton Krasniqi, the son of a pioneer Evangelical pastor. Driton enjoys good relations with political figures across party lines, as well as the small Jewish community, and Ines Demiri knows him well.

Until recently, it would have been difficult to imagine a Muslim country developing such close relations with Israel. However, since Israel's breakthrough last year with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco, nothing seems impossible. Good relations with Israel also seem to be an important pillar in Kosovo's policy. After the country's recent elections, new Foreign Minister Donika Gërvalla confirmed the Embassy would remain in Jerusalem. However, we should pray for the officials in Pristina, as they now are facing immense pressure from Turkey and Brussels to abandon Jerusalem.

The ICEJ is considering how to honour President Vjosa Osmani and the Government of Kosovo for this courageous decision to open an Embassy in Jerusalem. 🇰🇲



ICEJ HONOURS YUDIT SETZ AS LONGEST-SERVING STAFF MEMBER

BY DAVID PARSONS

In May, Yudit Setz marked 36 years of service with the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, where she helped pioneer our Social Assistance Program – today known as ICEJ AID.

Yudit Setz-Bokma comes from Holland, the daughter of Dutch Christian dairy farmers. Her grandparents hid a Jewish girl during the Holocaust who later became her mother's close friend. So Yudit grew up with a love for the Jewish people.

After completing her studies as a social worker, Yudit wanted to gain more life experience and discover God's purpose for her life. So she joined YWAM and spent six months in war-torn Lebanon in 1983 working with local Arab churches.

The next year, Yudit made her first trip to Israel to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. She came on an open ticket with little money, not knowing what lay ahead. She was staying with friends in the Negev when she met Margaret Breunese, an ICEJ Board member who told her the Embassy needed a social worker. Sensing this was God's call, Yudit took up the position on 8 May 1985 and has been faithfully serving with the ICEJ ever since.

"I recall my first day", she says. "There was a desk, a phone and a filing cabinet. There also was a small 'care closet' with clothes for the needy. But there was no one to train me, so I literally started from scratch."

In those early years, Yudit needed help preparing the Social Assistance Program's display table at the Feast. A young Dutchman named Will Setz, who was studying anthropology at Haifa University,



Yudit and Will Setz (with son Avi) overseeing the SAP display table at the Feast 1992.

came to help her for a few hours every Feast. Although these encounters were brief, by 1987 it became clear they were meant to be married. Will soon came alongside Yudit and they began to expand SAP's impact together.

"In those days, we found Israelis were friendly but after mentioning the word 'Christian Embassy' an invisible wall went up", says Yudit. "The history of Christian antisemitism was deeply engraved on many Jewish people, and we were the first evangelical Christians they met."

"Slowly, Israelis came to trust us. The breakthrough really came when the staff stood firmly by Israel during the most difficult periods, such as the first and second Palestinian intifadas and the 1991 Gulf War."

"We made sure to always work through local Israeli social workers and charities. And we tried to be where Israelis were hurting most, in the midst of wars and disasters."

Raising two young sons, Avi and Yaron, also allowed Yudit to connect with Israelis in an even deeper way in tense times.

"I've seen such a change", she adds. "Israelis started to understand better who these Christians were that had come to love them."

One of her most memorable AID projects was funding Muslim Arab women near Hebron to embroider pillows with biblical scenes and emblems of our Israeli charitable partners, which were then delivered as gifts to the Israeli charities on Israel's 50th Jubilee in 1998.

She also vividly recalls paying visits to Israeli families shattered by terror attacks. And Yudit will never forget showing up with aid and encouragement to Israeli communities under rocket fire from Gaza, even when warning sirens were still blaring.

Over recent years, Yudit has focused on assisting Holocaust survivors, a work which she and then-AID Director Nicole Yoder began to emphasize more after public protests in 2007 highlighted the plight of thousands of destitute survivors in Israel. Out of that came the Haifa Home for Holocaust survivors, which ICEJ began funding in 2010. Some three years ago, Yudit and Will decided to move to Haifa to oversee the Christian volunteers working at the assisted-living home, and to host visiting groups.

"I felt I was born for this work with Holocaust survivors", says Yudit. "All the years we invested in building Jewish-Christian relations just seem to be coming full circle in the way Jews and Christians and even Arabs are working alongside each other day-by-day to care for these deserving survivors. It is a tremendous privilege for Will and me to work together again as a couple on this. And we are driven by the thought there are only a few years left to bless these survivors before they pass away." 🕊



Yudit with a resident of the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors.



WATCH the PASSION WEEK series

Make sure to watch the 'Passion Week' teaching series, filmed in the locations in Jerusalem where Jesus spent his last week of ministry, praying for us, pouring out his life for our redemption, and then rising in triumph over death and the grave.

'Passion Week' is a special five-part video teaching series produced by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem to mark the Passover/Easter season, taking us on a journey from Palm Sunday through Resurrection Sunday. This video series brings to life the entry of Jesus over the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday; His agony in prayer at Gethsemane; His trial before Pilate at Herod's Palace; His death on Calvary; and the resurrection of Jesus from the tomb on the third day. With teachings by Dr Jürgen Bühler and Barry Denison, interviews with Rick Ridings, Chuck Cohen and Avraham Ben Hod, plus worship music by Israeli artists.

The 'Passion Week' series is available on the ICEJ's YouTube channel. Watch the entire playlist of video teachings at: on.icej.org/passionweek



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HEMOCARE HELPS TROUBLED HEARTS FIND RELIEF

BY MAXINE CARLILL

The city of Jerusalem is suddenly awakening. Though still missing the usual throngs of tourists, life is coming back to streets that are filling with excited people. While young people and families enjoy their freedom after a year of several corona lockdowns, the elderly assisted by ICEJ Homecare are hesitant to believe that they can go out and about. They noticeably suffered from the year of isolation and are taking time to overcome the loneliness and find the courage to finally leave the house.

Among them is a group who suffered and survived the Holocaust. To make Passover special during a challenging time, Homecare prepared homemade holiday greeting cards and gifts, and visited each of the eighty people in our care. Ninety-four-year-old Luba from Russia was one of them.

Luba suffered many trials growing up in the former Soviet Union, and over the past year she has faced overwhelming anxiety as her only son and his wife both experienced serious health issues. Her beloved granddaughter in Germany was unable to visit to help her parents because of the pandemic. Luba did what she could to cook meals and visit, within the restrictions of the lockdowns. She is no stranger to challenges, as she sometimes asks in desperation: "Why do these things happen to me?"



Recently, however, a small gift gave her a lot of joy. Despite her advanced age, she keeps in contact by internet with relatives living abroad. But sitting hunched over a computer in her tiny apartment added to the pain in her back. When Homecare bought her a laptop table, she could not stop rejoicing over this gift. Now she can sit straight and in comfort.

A visit with a single mother in central Israel had a frustrating start, despite the blue skies and sense of spring in the air that day. There was nowhere for Homecare nurse Corrie van Maanen to safely park her car, so the mother of nine children - and one sick that day - joined her on the sidewalk. She is a Russian immigrant who has been through deep



Homecare nurse Corrie van Maanen pays a special visit during Passover.

valleys but has also seen that the God of Israel is able to make a way when there was no way.

After her husband left her and the children following an abusive marriage, she applied for a subsidised apartment to relieve her financial distress. It was a long wait and then a change in policies again put her way down in the queue. Apart from Homecare encouraging and supporting her, she would have given up hope. When she received the telephone call of an available apartment much earlier than expected, she called Corrie immediately, saying: "You have been right, the God of Israel heard our cry!"

Often when she faces new, seemingly impossible situations, she reminds herself of that moment, beginning her sentence with, "I remember..."

During this sidewalk visit, as this struggling mom shared her problems and her blessings, she suddenly said: "I wish you could come more often. When I am with you, it all feels so different; life is not as difficult as it has been looking." As Corrie departed, she left her with some groceries and finance to pay for bills, as well as gifts for the children.

This is the strength of Homecare. To walk alongside those in need; To stand with them with support and encouragement when life is overwhelming; To listen and accept the person as they are. In this way, troubled hearts find relief.

Thanks to gifts from loving Christians, we can do more than listen. We also can bless a hurting person in practical ways.

PLEASE CONTINUE GIVING AT:
icej.org/homecare

Photo credit: Amanda Gross and Corrie van Maanen



ICEJ-SOUTH AFRICA SUPPORTS CHIEF JUSTICE'S STAND WITH ISRAEL

BY VIVIENNE MYBURGH, ICEJ-SA NATIONAL DIRECTOR

During a webinar discussion hosted by the Jerusalem Post in June last year with South Africa's Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng and Warren Goldstein,



the nation's chief rabbi, Mogoeng said he loves and prays for Israel. He accused critics of Israel of hypocrisy for not seeking to cut ties with former colonial powers in Africa and with

nations who exploit the continent today, as they do with Israel. "Did Israel take away our land or the land of Africa; did Israel take our mineral wealth?" said Mogoeng.

Acknowledging his strong Christian faith, he declared "I'm under an obligation as a Christian to love Israel, to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, which actually means the peace of Israel," citing Psalm 122 as a source.

His comments caused outrage among pro-Palestinian activists, including the Africa4Palestine/SA BDS Coalition, who went on to file complaints against him with

the Judicial Conduct Committee (JCC), accusing him of "becoming involved in political controversy or activity."

Participating in a virtual "Africa prayer meeting" shortly after the webinar, Mogoeng said that he would not apologise. "Even if 50 million people march every day for the next 10 years for me to apologise or retract what I said, I will



not do it" he said adding "Like Esther said, 'If I perish, I perish'."

In response, the ICEJ-South Africa branch initiated a joint petition between the ICEJ, Bridges for Peace and SA Friends of Israel, calling on South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to publicly support Mogoeng and to underline his right to freedom of expression.

On 4 March 2021, the complaint was upheld by the Judicial Services Commission and Mogoeng was ordered to apologise by reading out a pre-drafted apology.

On 10 March 2021, in a demonstration of support for our Chief Justice, ICEJ-SA handed over more than 300 personal messages of encouragement and prayers to his office, and gave an update on the petition, which by then had gained 122,000 signatures of support.

On 4 April 2021, Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng appealed the decision of the JCC.

The petition continues to grow and has to date garnered close to 145,000 signatures. It states: "We fully support the right of Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng to express his Christian convictions and support for peace in the Holy Land and we denounce those who are mischievously misinterpreting his message towards their hateful agenda." 🌐



ICEJ HELPS COMMEMORATE SOBIBOR UPRISING

Following a successful event which ICEJ-Russia organised in Moscow in January 2020 commemorating the Holocaust, the Russian branch again was invited by the Presidential Library of the Supreme Court of Russia to assist and participate in a special event held in early April to mark the Sobibor Uprising. On 14 October 1943, prisoners in the Sobibor concentration camp managed to kill a number of the SS commanders and guards, and close to 300 prisoners escaped through the barbed wire and minefield surrounding the camp. At the recent gathering, the film Unconquered by the Alexander Pechersky Foundation, telling the story of the uprising at Sobibor, was screened and several high-profile speakers presented remarks. The event was recorded for archiving online and broadcast live across Russia to more than 100 schools and universities. 🌐



ICEJ-Russia was invited by the Presidential Library of the Supreme Court of Russia to assist and participate in a special event to mark the Sobibor Uprising.



ICEJ BRANCHES HOST PASSOVER COMMUNITY SEDERS

BY ICEJ STAFF

During the recent Passover season, a number of our ICEJ national offices worldwide hosted community Seder meals for their constituencies, either in person or online, or quite often a combination of the two. Here are reports and photos from some of these events.



ICEJ-IRELAND

Hosting a Passover Seder meal by Zoom, Irish branch national director Brian Silvester gave a special presentation on why the Passover is important to Jews and Christians. His message highlighted how the first

Passover: 1) brought Israel together as a people as they moved from slavery to freedom; 2) Reminds us how God cared for Israel in the Wilderness and even today; 3) Reminds us that He is a God of miracles, even in restoring Israel today; 4) Emphasizes the importance of family - then and now; and finally 5) Reminds us of the need to take time with our children.



ICEJ-CANADA

ICEJ-Canada national director Donna Holbrook and her team arranged a virtual Passover Seder which quickly filled all 100 spots on their Zoom account with believers from coast-to-coast. Many others joined by the Facebook

livestream. Deputy branch director Adam Gabeli hosted the Seder alongside his father, Pastor Giulio Gabeli, with Arise director Phil Bedard leading in worship. Several others joined special guests Merv and Merla Watson as participants in the Seder program. The resulting feedback was excellent. One viewer said: "Your celebration tonight clarified the feast [of Passover] and helped connect the Old and New Testaments and the old and new covenants for me."



ICEJ-COOK ISLANDS

The Cook Islands branch, led by Leba Gukisuva, hosted a Passover celebration in person, beginning the evening with worship led by church choir members and dances

performed by the local ICEJ team. After a short explanation on the Seder plate elements, Communion was served by Pastor Lai, bringing home the message of the Cross. Everyone truly enjoyed the evening and the Passover meal prepared by ICEJ members.



ICEJ-NETHERLANDS

The ICEJ-Netherlands branch, led by Jacob and Hennie Keegstra, held a special online event explaining the Passover Seder meal. A beautiful interaction around the Seder table took place, with children

asking why this evening is different from others, while the story of the Exodus from Egypt was retold and explained. During the meal Jacob noted how, at the Last Supper, Jesus gave new meaning to the third cup, the cup of redemption, sealing the New Covenant by His blood. The online event has so far received 1,200 viewers online.



ICEJ-USA

Bram and Liesl Maas of the ICEJ-USA head office led two Passover meals, the first for a group of 6th grade students at World Outreach Church in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, who requested to learn more about how the first Passover in Egypt

directly links to the Last Supper of Jesus. The children were taken through the Seder meal together, while Bram led in traditional Israeli songs for Passover. The second Passover meal was for children at another Christian academy in the area. The visual elements of the Passover plate and matzos impacted them greatly.



ICEJ-UK

Dr David Elms, ICEJ-UK national director, hosted an online Passover celebration and Seder meal from his home in Liverpool. The event was joined by believers from across the British Isles. 🌍



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ISRAEL SET



49 USD FREE SHIPPING

ISRAEL SET*

1. Pack of 20 (33/33) Paper Napkins - Happy Independence
2. Package of 24 flags for an Israeli flag cupcake
3. Package of 6 Israeli flags (15/10 cm x 30 cm) (paper)
4. Israel flag (90x150 cm)
5. Whose land? Booklet
6. Magnet
7. Plastic stirrer with Israeli flag

BIBLICAL HOLIDAYS NAPKIN SET



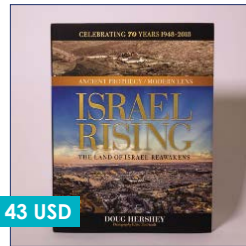
10 USD

BIBLICAL HOLIDAYS NAPKIN SET*

• Pack of 20, 33/33 Paper Napkins

1. Shavuot (Feast of Weeks - Wheat)
2. Rosh HaShana (Happy New Year - Pomegranates)
3. Sukkot (The Four Species - Gold)

*See full item descriptions at icejstore.com



43 USD

ISRAEL RISING, 70 YEARS CELEBRATION 1948-2018

MUSIC CD

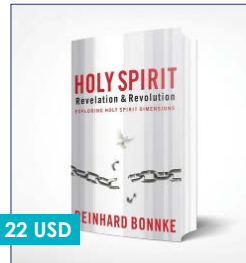
(Various Artists)

INTRODUCING the Israel Rising 70th Anniversary Commemorative CD! This CD has 14 powerful songs filled with a Heart for Israel. The listener will be taken on a musical and pictorial journey, blending Hebrew and English vocals with ancient and modern music, celebrating Israel's 70th Anniversary in song!



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HOLY SPIRIT, REVELATION & REVOLUTION

BOOK
BY REINHARD BONNKE

22 USD

In the book renowned international evangelist Reinhard Bonnke invites

you to break your bonds and encounter the meaning and miracles of the Spirit.



43 USD

JERUSALEM COMPASS

The Jerusalem Compass was developed in Jerusalem and is patented in the US. Instead of pointing north, it points only in the direction of Jerusalem from any point on the globe. Fashioned from pure solid brass, the lid is deeply embossed in the center with a Jewish Star of David and the words "Jerusalem" in Hebrew and English. The outer edges are encircled with a delicate floral design of

Pomegranates found on many ancient carvings in Jerusalem around the first temple period.

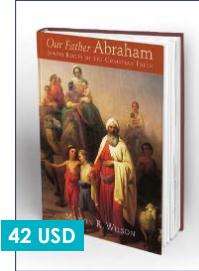
ISRAEL RISING, 70 YEARS CELEBRATION 1948-2018

BOOK BY DOUG HERSHEY

Whether by helicopter or on foot, on their own or with the aid of locals, author Doug Hershey and photographer Elise Monique Theriault negotiate the terrain to access the vantage points required to match the original photos, from the rooftop of Israel's National Museum of Science, Technology and Space in Haifa, to Jaffa Port's breakwater, and much more. Their quest creates a collection that will inspire and captivate as it illuminates Israel's foretold awakening in a new and unforgettable way.

OUR FATHER ABRAHAM BOOK

BY MARVIN R. WILSON



42 USD

Although the roots of Christianity run deep into Hebrew soil, many Christians are regrettably uninformed about the rich Hebrew heritage of the church. This volume delineates the link between Judaism and Christianity, between the Old and the New Testament, and calls Christians to re-examine their Hebrew roots so as to effect a more authentically biblical lifestyle.

ICEJ CALENDAR 2021

~~19 USD~~ 5 USD

New ICEJ Calendar "Life in Israel" includes: Jewish and Christian holidays; Isaiah 62 prayer dates every month; Torah portion and Haftarah; 14 beautiful pictures of everyday life in Israel; Special events of ICEJ Jerusalem. Each calendar day has a writing area.



12 USD

PLUSH SITTING BEAR SOUVENIRS

Available in Israeli/ IDF.

Height: 8 1/2 inches | 22 cm

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FEAST of TABERNACLES

PRESENTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN EMBASSY JERUSALEM

20-26 SEPTEMBER 2021



THE DAYS OF ELIJAH



“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord...”

- Malachi 4:5-6 -

Start preparing today for this year's Feast of Tabernacles celebration.

The ICEJ is planning Feast 2021 as both a *physical gathering in Israel and an online event broadcast around the world.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

Arrive in Israel on 19 September and enjoy the benefits of our Feast land-package, as you celebrate the Feast in-person.

Or

Enjoy the Feast online from your home, with the option of watching content for either 90 days or 9 months!

Either way, you will be blessed by the Lord and see His miracle working power in your life.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

Visit our website at on.icej.org/FOT2021 for further information on the exciting in-person and online registration packages that are available. Or email us at: feastreg@icej.org

We look forward to hosting you at Feast 2021!

on.icej.org/FOT2021

**Physical gathering is subject to Israeli Health Regulations.*