



WORD

FROM JERUSALEM



...
**A FRUITFUL LAND,
AN ABIDING PROMISE**

(PAGE 10)

...

ICEJ BOMB SHELTERS
PROTECT ISRAELIS IN LATEST ROCKET WAR



The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was established in 1980 in recognition of the biblical significance of all 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 recognize 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 into more than 170 countries worldwide, with branch offices in over 90 nations.

Our vision is:

- To reach every segment of Israel's 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 partners 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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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Dear friends,

After traveling through Europe recently, I left with a troubled and sad feeling about what I see happening. Various European countries are finding themselves in a challenging season as they try to emerge from the COVID pandemic while facing a brutal war nearby. Not only are there high inflation rates and shortages of certain food supplies, but I have seen long lines of needy people forming outside soup kitchens in my hometown in Germany. In addition, people fear an energy shortage this coming winter. I sense we are watching our prosperous times crumble before our eyes as Europe returns to a bygone era when poverty and war swept across Europe.

At the same time, when looking toward Israel, I am amazed at how the nation not only fared well during the COVID crisis but is also economically strong, despite more than three years of political instability and a fifth election campaign approaching. I think of Isaiah 60, where the prophet sees gross darkness covering the earth, but the light of God rises over His people—a good description of the situation in our world today.

In this issue of *Word From Jerusalem*, we look at the recent three-day rocket war launched against Israel from Gaza and how bomb shelters in the land saved many lives. You can read about this and why Lebanon's growing economic crisis is creating an urgent need for more bomb shelters in the North on pages 4–5.

We also feature an inspiring Bible teaching on this year's Feast theme: "The Land of Promise" (see pages 10–13). In it, ICEJ Vice President and Senior Spokesman David Parsons leans into his legal background to bring out fresh spiritual truths about a subject of great importance—the role of the land promise in God's redemptive plan. He also explores how we as Christians should respond to the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland today.

On page 15, you can read about how the ICEJ is impacting Aliyah this year. With your help, we hope to sponsor more Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia, Russia, and Ukraine over the coming months.

As you read through this magazine, I hope you will be blessed and encouraged by all we do together. Thank you for standing with us even during difficult times in your own countries. We trust and pray that you are experiencing God's blessing in return for blessing and comforting Israel.

I hope to see many of you in person at the Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem from 9–16 October. If you can't physically be with us, please check out how to join us online through our special streaming platform at www.icejusa.org/feast-online/.

In the love of Christ!

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
President

International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

COVER PHOTO: Jewish children in front of an ICEJ-donated bomb shelter placed at the Bnai Yosef Religious School in Sderot

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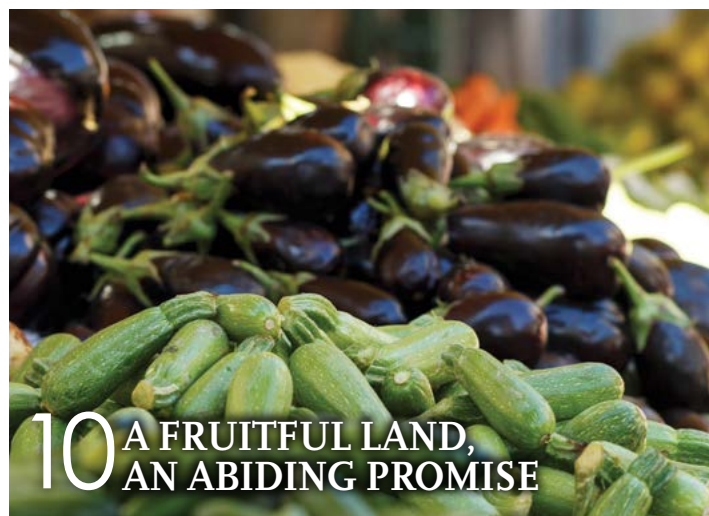
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Geographical Area	State Group	Country	2021	2022 (1-5)	Total for Years
FSU	Russia	Russia	7,760	12,562	20,352
	Ukraine	Ukraine	3,129	10,974	14,103
	Belarus	Belarus	1,042	712	1,754
	Moldova	Moldova	99	60	159
	Southern Caucasus	Azerbaijan	154	74	228
		Armenia	11	5	16
		Georgia	151	55	246
	Central Asia	Uzbekistan	202	143	435
		Tajikistan	7	1	8
		Turkmenistan		1	1
		Kazakhstan	218	112	330
		Kirgistan	20	4	24
		Estonia	4	6	10
	Rest of FSU	Unknown FSU		2	2
		Latvia	65	24	89
			9	15	
			24,814	37,772	

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AS NUMBERS CLIMB

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ICEJ BOMB SHELTERS

Protect Israelis in Latest Rocket War

BY DAVID PARSONS, ICEJ VICE PRESIDENT & INTERNATIONAL SPOKESMAN



Dozens of bomb shelters donated by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem to Israeli communities along the Gaza border proved their worth once more in the intense three-day rocket war launched against Israel by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror militia in early August.

The ceasefire announced a few days later held, and the Israeli farming villages near Gaza are trying to return to normal life. However, the shelters supplied by the ICEJ are a big reason these communities can stay put under the constant threat of rocket attack from terrorists in Gaza. And in fact, these areas are seeing remarkable growth due to our lifesaving shelters and reassuring support.

Ofir Libshtein, mayor of the Sha'ar HaNegev Regional Council, told the ICEJ that the 10 towns in his region were targeted with over 300 rockets over the 3 days of fighting. This rocket barrage meant people in that area heard hundreds of red alert sirens and had to run for safe rooms each time.

"The Iron Dome is an amazing miracle," said Mayor Libshtein. "We have found a solution to deal with 96 percent of the rockets. But because we are so close to the border, [some] rockets hit before the alarm even sounds sometimes."

"We feel safer. Our children can go outside knowing they can find a shelter when the rockets start."
—Ofir Libshtein

Despite this, Libshtein said that because the Sha'ar HaNegev region has received so much over the last 10 years, "we have grown from 5,200 to almost 10,000 people." He added, "This is because we know we have friends all over the

world like you who help us to build shelters all over the area. We feel safer. Our children can go outside knowing they can find a shelter when the rockets start. And this is a great opportunity to say thank you very much for helping us grow stronger and bigger."

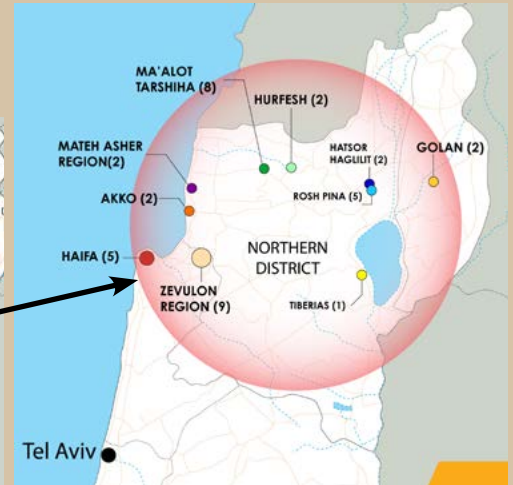
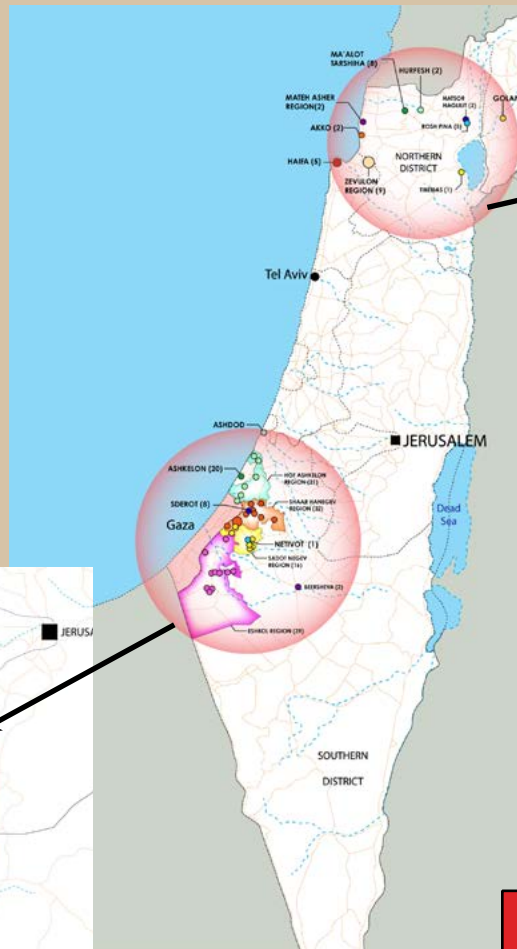
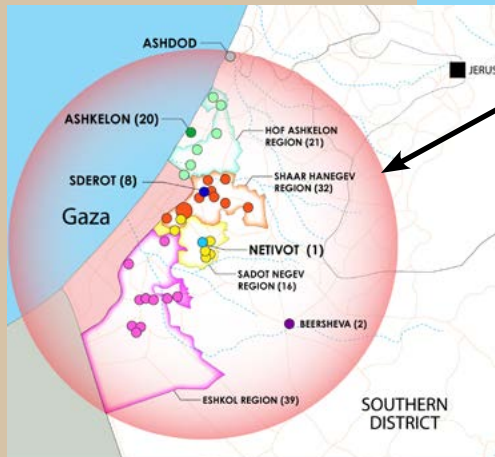
The ICEJ has placed dozens of mobile bomb shelters in communities in the Gaza envelope, stretching from Kerem Shalom in the South all the way up through Sderot and Ashkelon. We work in consultation with local authorities, security chiefs, and social agencies to identify places where our shelters can do the most good. Thus, we have donated shelters to schools, daycare centers, medical clinics, youth centers, community

178 ICEJ BOMB SHELTERS INSTALLED

South District

Southern Israel regions where ICEJ has sponsored the installation of bomb shelters

Ashkelon (20)
Beersheva (2)
Eshkol Region (39)
Hof Ashkelon Region (21)
Sadot Negev Region (16)
Sderot (8)
Sha'ar HaNegev Region (32)
Netivot (1)



North District

Northern Israel regions where ICEJ has sponsored the installation of bomb shelters

Akko (2)
Golan (2)
Haifa (5)
Mateh Asher (2)
Zevulun
Hatzor HaGlilit (2)
Hurfesh (3)
Ma'alot Tarshiha (8)
Rosh Pina (5)
Tiberias (1)

Help provide more bomb shelters for Israeli communities under rocket threat at:
www.icejusa.org/bomb-shelters/

halls, university campuses, factories, and other public places that cannot operate during times of crisis without adequate bomb shelters.

The need for more bomb shelters in the North also has become an increasing concern, especially due to the severe lack of public shelters and Lebanon's growing economic crisis. In response, the Christian Embassy is increasing its efforts to assist towns in the northern Galilee and Haifa regions in protecting their most vulnerable communities. Over recent years the ICEJ has placed 39 shelters at public places in Haifa, Akko, Kfar Maccabi, Hurfesh, Rosh Pina, Tiberias, the Zevulun region just east of Haifa, and on the Golan. The shelters are protecting not only Jewish residents but also Arab Christian, Muslim, Druze, and Bedouin communities.

"We are helping them not only to stay but to grow larger and stronger as communities."
—Dr. Jürgen Bühler

"It is always so encouraging when Israelis living under this constant rocket threat tell us that our bomb shelters are indeed saving lives and giving their families the peace of mind that they need to continue their daily lives in these vulnerable areas," said ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler. "And we have seen ourselves all the

new apartment buildings and neighborhoods being built in Israeli towns near Gaza. It means that the enemy wanted to chase them out, but we are helping them not only to stay but to grow larger and stronger as communities."

Over the past 15 years, the ICEJ has donated 178 bomb shelters to Israeli communities under rocket threat, with the majority (139) placed in towns along the Gaza periphery and the remaining shelters (39) deployed in Northern Israel. The vast majority have been reinforced portable bomb shelters capable of holding 10–50 people, while several were large underground public shelters that needed extensive repairs.

The western Negev region has received most of the ICEJ's shelters due to the frequency of the rocket barrages coming from Gaza and the area's proximity to the border. Residents

of towns and villages within 4–6 miles of the Gazan border have only 15 seconds to find shelter, and they are not protected by the Iron Dome anti-missile system—which can only track and intercept rockets with longer ranges. 🌍

ICEJ USA RESTORES UNDERGROUND SHELTER FOR YEMENITE COMMUNITY NEAR GAZA

BY CHRIS CHAMBERS

Moshav Mash'en is a small Israeli farming community close to the Gaza border founded by Yemenite Jews in 1950. During the rocket war with Hamas in May 2021, the village medical center had to close down because it lacked an adequate bomb shelter to protect against the flurry of incoming rockets from Gaza.

For 20 years, the community has campaigned to repair an underground bomb shelter beside the medical clinic to keep it open during times of crisis. The room was dark, flooded with water, home to wild animals, and moldy.

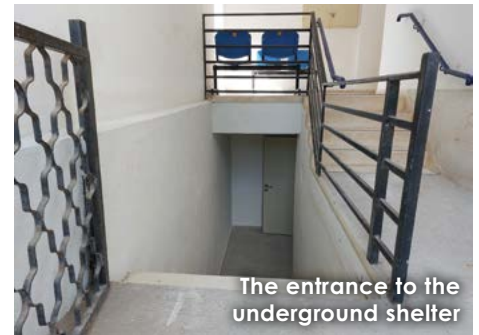


Nicole Yoder, ICEJ VP for AID & Aliyah, presents a donor plaque.

“Things looked impossible,” said Amnon Ziv, security chief for the Hof Ashkelon region. “Should we collapse it or close it off? But we soon began to believe that nothing is impossible!”

This is because the ICEJ USA office came through with funds to fully restore the underground shelter, which also serves a nearby kindergarten and synagogue. In July a small ICEJ delegation attended the official reopening ceremony.

Nicole Yoder, ICEJ Vice President for AID & Aliyah, joined local community leaders in mounting a donor plaque at the shelter's entrance. She told the gathering: “This gift comes from Christians. ... We are thrilled to be part of this beautiful project, and we hope it gives you peace of mind and saves lives.”



The entrance to the underground shelter

Amnon Ziv and Itamar Revivo, mayor of the Hof Ashkelon region, spoke kindly about the Christian donors and explained the mammoth task of restoring the shelter. The facility is now waterproofed and has a kitchen, revamped bathrooms, and air conditioning, and the medical center can treat patients during emergencies. In addition, the bunker is now a comfortable space for year-round children's activities and community gatherings.

Mayor Revivo also noted that while the shelter will protect lives from injury and death, the rockets still cause fear and emotional trauma, which takes years to heal—especially in children. But having the security of the shelter nearby enables normal life to go on and aids in the recovery of those suffering from trauma.

Your support gives hope to many vulnerable Israeli citizens who need our help. Please continue to give to the ICEJ's “Israel in Crisis” fund so we can be ready to save more lives in Israel's next emergency. 🌍

Donate today at: www.icejusa.org/bomb-shelters/

PSALM 91
BOMB SHELTER
Campaign



When an air raid siren sounds, any Israeli caught on the street—children walking home from school, mothers strolling their babies, families running errands, the elderly taking the bus—**must find immediate shelter, sometimes with only 15–20 seconds' notice.** Bomb shelters provided by the ICEJ can protect up to 45 people depending on the size of the shelter!

Show your care for Israel. Donate today.
icejusa.org/bomb-shelters

AGES
18-32



Join the Israel Impact Tour for a life-changing trip to the Holy Land! In these unprecedented times we are inviting you to take a leap of faith on the journey of a lifetime to the Land of ISRAEL. If you are a young adult ages 18-32 and have a desire to see the land of the Bible, sign up on the interest list on our website for this tour.



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JUNE 20-30, 2023

\$3,280

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- ✓ Meeting and assistance upon arrival
- ✓ 9 nights hotel accommodation
- ✓ Half-board accommodation (breakfast & dinner)
- ✓ All excursions, sites, and entry fees to national parks
- ✓ English-Hebrew licensed tour guide
- ✓ Modern air conditioned bus
- ✓ Bus with Wi-Fi onboard

CAUTIOUS SAUDIS “SLOW WALK” PEACE WITH ISRAEL

BY DAVID PARSONS,
ICEJ VICE PRESIDENT & SENIOR SPOKESMAN



US President Joe Biden greets Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman after arriving in Saudi Arabia in July.

During his visit to the Middle East in July, US President Joe Biden raised hopes of an imminent breakthrough between Israel and Saudi Arabia, but he fell short when the Saudis greeted him with a cold shoulder. The cool reception signaled that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was personally miffed by Biden's criticism of his rule and the American (and Israeli) media leaks of recent covert meetings between Israeli and Saudi leaders. The lesson for Israel is that the House of Saud is still interested in normalizing relations—primarily due to the Iranian threat and the benefits of tapping into Israeli hi-tech solutions—but they prefer a slow walk toward peace.

After three packed days in Israel, Biden boarded the first direct flight from Ben Gurion Airport to Saudi Arabia. The flight happened amid reports that he was forging a regional Israeli-Arab military alliance against Iran—and might even pull off a dramatic diplomatic breakthrough between Jerusalem and Riyadh. However, it soon became clear the Saudis did not share his urgency or ambitious agenda.

First, Biden disappointed his own political base by fist-bumping bin Salman upon arrival, which was seen by progressives back home as an even friendlier gesture than a handshake. This was particularly so after Biden had vowed to treat the Saudi ruler as a “pariah” for allegedly approving the murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey in 2018. When Biden confronted bin Salman over the grim incident, the Crown Prince instantly fired back with pointed questions about the unresolved death of Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh in Israel and the infamous Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal involving American troops in Iraq two decades ago.

Even before Biden landed, the Saudis had already doused hopes of any looming diplomatic opening. As Biden bid farewell to Israeli caretaker Prime Minister Yair Lapid, the two were elated by the Saudi announcement they would open their airspace to all airlines, with the US president hailing it as a “a big deal” and “the first tangible step” toward Israeli-Saudi normalization. But while Biden was en route to Jeddah, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal

bin Farhan countered that the opened airspace had “nothing to do with diplomatic ties with Israel” and was “not in any way a precursor to any further steps” toward normalization.

A second Saudi cabinet minister, Adel al-Jubeir, soon added that while peace with Israel is “possible” and a “strategic option,” it would first have to wait for the creation of a Palestinian state with eastern Jerusalem as its capital.

Surprisingly, the United Arab Emirates—which already has ties with Israel via the Abraham Accords—also dampened expectations by stating that “the UAE is not part of any axis against Iran.”

Even Biden's most urgent action item—getting the Saudis to increase oil production to replace sanctioned Russian oil—was met with disappointment, as Riyadh only offered a modest two-month uptick in petrol supplies for the troubled global energy market. So Israelis must now draw their own conclusions about what Biden's bungled mission means for their country.

First, the regional dynamic between Israel and its Arab neighbors remains positive overall for the Jewish state. Much of the Israeli-Arab coalescing of late has to do with the Iranian threat. That impetus will only keep driving them together, as a key Iranian official just declared that Tehran now has “the technical ability to build a nuclear bomb.”

Second, Israelis also know any real, lasting peace in the region is usually worked out by and between the local players themselves, and sometimes the less outside interference, the better.

Third, Israelis surely realize Biden had made it personal between himself and bin Salman, and the Crown Prince was not interested in handing the American president any real wins in his visit to the Kingdom. Instead, he exploited Biden's visit to regain some of his lost legitimacy over the Khashoggi affair.

The Saudi leader also made clear he dislikes leaks to the press—such as the disclosure that IDF Chief-of-Staff Gen. Aviv Kochavi recently met with his Saudi counterpart during a secret regional summit of Israeli and Arab generals to discuss military and intelligence cooperation against Iran. Israel needs to keep that in mind going forward.

According to Israeli-American entrepreneur Avi Jorisch, the US and Saudi Ara-

bia quietly managed to sign some 18 unheralded but important agreements on various cooperative efforts, including a lucrative solar energy deal involving an Israeli research and development (R&D) company.

Jorisch also noted that Israel had discreet trade and investment ties with the Emirates and Bahrain for several decades before they ripened into the Abraham Accords. He was involved in developing those economic ties and is now working on similar initiatives with Saudi Arabia. In fact, in May he

led a high-level delegation of some 50 Jewish CEOs of major global companies on a first-ever visit to Medina no less, which historically has been off-limits to non-Muslims.

In meetings with Saudi government, business, and religious leaders, Jorisch found much mutual respect and interest in working together, even though their hosts knew several Israeli nationals were on foreign passports. Thus, he believes the same process of normalization that took place with the UAE and Bahrain is now happening

with the Saudis. Still, because of their special role as guardians of Islam's holiest sites, the Saudis are traditionally cautious and will "slow walk" the path to peace with Israel.

Finally, Israelis should understand the Saudis are proud of their 2002 peace plan (even though it was dreamed up by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman), and they will continue to publicly insist on a two-state solution under its term—even while quietly making deals with Israel for their own self-interest. 🌍

ISRAELI ELECTIONS MAY NOT RESOLVE POLITICAL IMPASSE

BY DAVID PARSONS,
ICEJ VICE PRESIDENT
& SENIOR SPOKESMAN

Israel finds itself in yet another election season—the fifth in the past three-and-a-half years. This prolonged time of political uncertainty could even linger on after the November balloting, as the early polls show little movement toward a clear winner.

At the heart of the political impasse is the fate of Benjamin Netanyahu, the nation's longest-serving prime minister, who is currently facing trial for bribery, fraud, and breach of trust. The three cases brought against Netanyahu took several years to investigate, and although the trial is now underway, it has proceeded slowly as numerous witnesses have given testimony for or against him. So far there is no clear direction on whether he will beat the charges.

Many Israelis view Netanyahu as an indispensable national and global leader facing an attempted "leftist" coup to bring him down. His opponents—including some on the Right—say he has undermined Israeli democracy by failing to step away from office while under indictment.

The latest polls still show neither the pro- nor anti-Bibi camps



A billboard in Israel featuring the two political opponents Benjamin Netanyahu and Yair Lapid

getting enough votes to form a majority government, though Netanyahu's block is slightly closer to the 61 Knesset seats needed. No one wants a sixth election, and everyone realizes it will be hard for chief rival Yair Lapid of *Yesh Atid* to reconstitute the broad Right-to-Left coalition that remained in power over the past year. Thus, political analysts suggest one of two likely outcomes.

If Netanyahu is close to 61 seats, several MKs on the Right who oppose him could cave to pressure and support his return to the premiership. Alternatively, if the polling deadlock continues as we get closer to the November ballot, pressure might grow within Netanyahu's own party to finally replace him as chairman to enable the formation of a Likud-led coalition government coming out of this election.

Of course, if there is a major development in Netanyahu's trial one way or the other, that could also tip the election. But the wheels of justice will likely continue to turn slowly. Therefore, please pray for God's will to be done in this perpetual election season in Israel and that the Lord will continue to watch over this nation and people. 🌍



A *Fruitful* LAND, AN ABIDING *Promise*

BY DAVID PARSONS, ICEJ VICE PRESIDENT & SENIOR SPOKESMAN

As we consider this year's Feast theme of "The Land of Promise," we tend to focus on the "land" part. This is understandable, as the land of Israel is so unique, diverse, bountiful, and captivating.

You can go from majestic snow-capped Mount Hermon to the shimmering Sea of Galilee, down to the lowest point on Earth at the ultra-

salty Dead Sea, past the striking Ramon Crater, and end up at the tropical Red Sea. There are fertile valleys like the Ayalon, Hula, and Jezreel. There are the rolling hills of Judea and Shomron and the Carmel range, while the coastal region boasts the scenic plains of Sharon and Shephelah, not to mention all the alluring Mediterranean beaches.

Israel is also known today for its amazing agricultural produce, cutting-edge drip irrigation and water conservation, and expertise in creating new fruits and vegetables. From choice greenhouse cherry tomatoes to flavorful Medjool dates to zesty Jaffa oranges, the successes of modern Israeli farmers are legendary. Israel has one of the most nutritious domestic food supplies in the world, even

ranking above France and the United States. The nation also exports high-quality farm produce in all seasons, even while its Arab neighbors must import food to feed their people. And all this is taking place in a land that is largely desert.



Yet the land of Israel was not always so fruitful. In fact, throughout all the centuries of Jewish exile, the land lay desolate and would not yield fruit for another people, just as the Bible said it would (Leviticus 26:20; Deuteronomy 11:16–17; Jeremiah 18:15–17).

Meantime, the dispersed Jewish people were not known for having a “green thumb.” They were largely forbidden to own property in the primarily Christian and Muslim lands they were scattered to, which meant they lost the ability to farm.

This makes the bounty coming from the land of Israel today even more astounding. Still, God had promised that one day He would return the Jewish people to their ancient homeland, and the land would again yield its fruit for them, while the desert would “blossom like a rose” (Isaiah 35:1; Ezekiel 36:8, 29–36; Zechariah 8:11–12).

When we realize how remarkable this prophetic transformation of the land of Israel is, our focus shifts to the “promise” part of “The Land of Promise”—and especially to the God who promised all these things. That is where our attention truly belongs!

THE MODERN-DAY RESTORATION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE BACK TO THE LAND DIVINELY PROMISED TO THEM IS AN INCREDIBLE TESTAMENT TO THE FAITHFULNESS, RELIABILITY AND EVEN LOVE OF THE GOD WE SERVE.

THE LAND OF PROMISE

The modern-day restoration of the Jewish people back to the Land divinely promised to them is an incredible testament to the faithfulness, reliability, and even love of the God we serve.

Every Christian should be amazed that God has kept a promise made by sworn oath to Abraham 4,000 years ago because it demonstrates that we can absolutely trust Him to keep every promise He has made to us in Christ through the new covenant. This, after all, is the whole point of Hebrews 6:13–20. So witnessing Israel’s ongoing restoration in our day should build our faith and our awe of God!

Yet some Christians still question whether the return of the Jews to the land of Israel is from God. They say it is a mere accident of history or the result of a “man-made Zionism” fraught with injustice. Others contend the Jews forfeited their right to the land by rejecting Jesus or that the land was only needed until Christ came and the church was born. Many insist we should be more concerned about salvation than any physical piece of land. And some spiritualize the land promise to the point that it has no earthly relevance.

But think about it! If we love someone, shouldn’t we keep our promises to them? You can tell your spouse or child that you love them all you want, but if you start breaking your promises to them, it only rings hollow. That is why God’s promise to give them the land still matters today. God’s loyalty to His oath is the hallmark of His love! Indeed, the very character of God is at stake over His faithfulness to keep His promise to deliver the land of Israel to Abraham’s descendants as an “everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8).

Now, there indeed are wonderful spiritual lessons for our own lives, which we can take from the biblical story of the promised land. But before we go there, let us first try to understand more fully the nature of God’s promise and how it is treated throughout Scripture.

ENTRUSTED WITH GOD’S LAND

Clearly, the Bible records how God originally promised the Land of Canaan to Abraham and his natural descendants through Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 13:15, 15:17–21, 17:5–8, 28:13, 35:12; Psalm 108:8–12). But the nature of the title that Abraham and his offspring received is key to understanding the eternal purpose behind this promise.

As a former practicing real estate attorney, I was used to rendering opinions on title for landowners I represented. And I am amazed at the similarities between the divine land promise to Israel in the Bible and property deeds today. For example, the grantor and grantee are specified, there are clear words of conveyance and warranty of title, and there are several consistent “meets-and-bounds” descriptions of the precise lands conveyed (Genesis 15:18–21; Numbers 34:2–12). But what exactly is the nature or kind of title Israel received?

Normally, when someone conveys a piece of property to another person, they deliver title in “fee simple absolute,” meaning the grantor transfers all his rights and claims in the land to the grantee, and he retains nothing. If the grantee then wants to build a beer joint on the property, the former owner can do nothing about it.

But that is not how God vested title to the land to Abraham and his heirs. He did not just hand over the land scot-free. How so?

In His covenant with Abraham, God chose both the land and the people of Israel for the purpose of world redemption so that together they might



Moses Throws the Tablet of Stone. Illustration from the 1897 *Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us: Containing 400 Illustrations from the Old and New Testaments: With brief descriptions by Charles Foster.*

form a nation that, over time, would deliver all the means we need for salvation (Genesis 12:1–3; 17:4–8; 22:15–18; Psalm 105:8–11; Acts 7:2–5; Romans 9:4–5; Galatians 3:7–8).

But in His covenant with Moses, God placed conditions on Israel's right to enjoy possession of the land—summarized in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, which set forth the moral requirements Israel needed to meet to remain in the land given to them. Otherwise, God vowed to exile them as a corrective measure. Yet the loss of possession did not mean losing the underlying title, as He also promised to find them and bring them back to the land (Leviticus 26:40–45). Why? Because He had already promised Abraham by sworn oath to deliver the land to his offspring as an “everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8).

Now, if God just handed over the land to the Israelites in “fee simple absolute,” He would have no right to come along later and impose these conditions. This means that Israel actually received title to the land in the nature of a trust—whereby God retains ultimate ownership but entrusted the land of Canaan to them to further His plan for redeeming the world. Israel holds title exclusive of any other claimant, but it is not absolute ownership free of any obligation to God or to others. In this trust relationship, Israel is both a trustee and a beneficiary, as the land was there to protect and provide for them over time. And even we gentiles are beneficiaries of that trust relationship, as salvation ultimately came to us, as well.

This trust relationship is evident in Leviticus 25, where the Lord sets out the commands

**“THE LAND WHICH I GAVE
ABRAHAM AND ISAAC I
GIVE TO YOU; AND TO YOUR
DESCENDANTS AFTER YOU I
[WILL] GIVE THIS LAND.”**

- Genesis 35:12 -

for observing the Jubilee every 50 years. One of His core commands was that any family or tribal lands lost due to debts had to be returned to their original owners, while no part of the land could be permanently sold, “for the land is Mine” (Leviticus 25:23).

This trusteeship also is reflected in the

intriguing words of conveyance found in the passage where God assures Jacob: “The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I [will] give this land” (Genesis 35:12).

God already *gave* the land (past tense), He is *giving* the land (present tense), and He will *give* the land (future tense)—all in one verse. This speaks of God's continual, abiding entrusting of the land to Abraham's offspring while retaining its ultimate ownership.

This unique trust relationship involving the land and people of Israel, which has seen them separate and come back together at various preordained times, has been working out God's plan for world redemption all along. Israel has never forfeited its title to the land; God has never reneged on His land promise to Abraham; and the land promise awaits an ultimate, future fulfillment. We see this, for example, in the simple but powerful words: “I will give you rest.”

ENTERING OUR REST

Despite the doubts of some Christians, the New Testament affirms in numerous places that Israel indeed has a future destiny back in the Land of Promise. We find one “proof text” in the book of Hebrews.

The writer of Hebrews spends much of chapters three and four urging us to “enter” the rest provided in Jesus, drawing an analogy to the Israelites' failure in the wilderness to enter the rest promised them in the land of Canaan. This promise of rest originates in an emotional conversation between God and His servant, Moses, in the days after the first giving of the Ten Commandments. The Lord was still angry over the sin of the golden calf and told Moses he and the people should go ahead to Canaan without Him, lest He “consume” them along the way. But Moses interceded—and God relented, vowing: “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33:14).

This promise of rest in the land is then repeated elsewhere in the books of Moses, including Deuteronomy 3:20, 12:9, and 25:19.

Now, some assert that this promised rest was fulfilled when Joshua led the people in conquering the land, citing such passages as Joshua 21:44: “The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers.” Yet the writer of Hebrews insists

that if Joshua had truly given them the rest God intended, there would have been no need for David to later speak of a coming day of rest in Psalm 95:9–11.

These verses, taken together, clearly indicate that God intends for Israel to one day enter a permanent rest in the land promised to them as an “everlasting possession.” It is a rest whereby the nation never again has to struggle to possess the land and her people can finally rest from their works—striving for righteousness through the law—just as God rested from His works.

The book of Hebrews affirms this in the simplest of terms: “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:19; see also Hebrews 4:1).

To this day, the promise of an abiding rest for Israel back in the land has never been completely fulfilled. But we are now witnessing a process of restoration that will eventually end in Israel as a nation entering this rest in their ancestral homeland. They will finally meet the conditions God placed on their right to enjoy possession of the land: they will have appropriated to themselves the same atonement you and I have accepted by faith to enter our rest in Jesus.

This is the same destiny of Israel Moses prophesied long ago when he declared the Lord Himself would one day provide atonement for both the land and the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 32:43).

When that day arrives, the Jewish people will no longer need to strive for righteousness through their own efforts. Their fear of enemies and exile will be over. And even the whole world will be at rest in what we refer to as the “millennium” or the “messianic age.”

Surely, God has solemnly vowed to deliver the land of Israel to the Jewish people in rest and peace forever. And you and I will once more be beneficiaries of that unique trust relationship between God, the land, and the people of Israel.

OUR OWN PROMISED LAND

We can undoubtedly draw many important lessons for our own spiritual walks from the biblical truths surrounding the Land of Promise. We have all heard sermons on how we each have a promised land from God but must fight the giants to possess what is rightfully

ours. This is a land that will provide for us, and if we are pleasing to the Lord, we will have rest from our enemies. These are all valid, helpful, and inspiring analogies. But let us narrow in on what we can take away from this understanding that God entrusted the land to Israel for His divine purposes.

When the Lord gives us our own promised land—a ministry, a building, a business—it is because He wants to accomplish some divine purpose in and through our lives. But whatever He gives us, it is never truly ours. He entrusts us with what we need to pursue His kingdom's purposes. We cannot just waste it on personal pleasures. We have obligations to Him and others. The New Testament often refers to this as “stewardship.”

Indeed, Jesus speaks in several parables about good and bad “stewards” in the kingdom of God (see, for example, Matthew 20:1–16; Luke 12:42, 16:1–8).

Paul also urged believers to consider him and his fellow apostles as “servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that one must be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:1–2). Elsewhere, Paul says we should be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10; see also Colossians 1:25) and that he was “entrusted with the gospel” (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

God entrusts us with everything we need to fulfill His eternal purposes in our lives. But ultimately, it all belongs to Him, and we are

just trustees and stewards of His grace and provision. We do not have absolute ownership or possess anything for ourselves but are sojourners in this world. Yet God supplies everything we need according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19). This is a continual, abiding promise of His provision—past, present, and future. And it ends with all the redeemed—including Israel—entering that promised rest of His glorious, eternal reign!

Meanwhile, we should continue to be amazed and inspired by God's faithfulness to release the fruitful bounty of the land of Israel to a Jewish people regathered from the four corners of the earth. That should do something for our faith in Him and our trust that God will perform every good promise we have in Christ Jesus! 🌍

*We should continue to be amazed and inspired by the faithfulness of God to release the *fruitful* bounty of the land of Israel to a Jewish people regathered from the four corners of the earth.*

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Aliyah Support Vital as Numbers Climb

BY CHRIS CHAMBERS

Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God . . . who brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer.
(Ezekiel 39:28)

Since the start of 2022, the total number of Jewish immigrants moving to Israel has already surpassed the annual figures for 2021, with 28,638 Olim (newcomers) arriving in the Land between January and May. The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been a crucial partner with Israel and the Jewish Agency in supporting this dramatic rise in Aliyah, especially from Ukraine and Ethiopia.

A significant factor in the current surge of Aliyah has been the war in Ukraine. As of May, 10,974 Ukrainian Jews who fled the Russian invasion have immigrated to Israel. An even higher number of Russian Jews have made Aliyah to escape Russia's economic uncertainty—12,592. Together these figures are already double the number of Jewish immigrants that arrived from Russia and Ukraine in 2021. Over the past six months, the ICEJ has sponsored 949 Ukrainian Olim with Aliyah flights, preflight assistance, rescue services, temporary housing, and other needs.

Recent media reports have raised concerns that there will be a slowdown in Aliyah from Russia. However, the Jewish Agency has clarified that a regular review process is underway, and they expect the upward trend to continue—so there is much work to do.



Donia Schwartzman

UKRAINIAN ALIYAH

An Aliyah flight in late June arrived from Poland with 120 Ukrainian immigrants aboard. Among them was 88-year-old Donia Schwartzman, who witnessed the murder of her mother and baby sister at the hands of the Nazis when she was just seven years old. She miraculously escaped certain death in the “shooting pits” and survived, thanks to the kindness of strangers. She eventually built a life for herself; today, Donia is a proud great-grandmother.

In her worst dreams she could not have imagined being driven out of her home again and having to endure another war. Thanks to the courage of her grandson, Igor, and the support of the Jewish Agency, she boarded a medically accompanied flight to Israel and has started her new life. When asked how we might further assist her, Donia replied, “Find me a husband!” Her real wish, however, is that “there be no more war—only peace.”



Ayinegida, Tiru, and their three children, who recently immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia

ETHIOPIAN ALIYAH

The ICEJ also recently funded a flight of 160 Ethiopian Jews who arrived in June as part of the Operation *Tzur Yisrael* (“Rock of Israel”) emergency airlift. One such family making Israel their new home is Tiru (29 years old), her husband Ayinegida (38), and their three children: daughter Bethlehem (9), son Eyasu (4), and little Ermiyas (1).

The family recently expressed their excitement in making Aliyah and how they had waited 10 years in Gondar, Ethiopia, for news of approval to come. They even named their firstborn Bethlehem as an expression of their faith and longing to be reunited with Tiru's parents, who made Aliyah in 2020, and her grandparents, who came to Israel several years before.

Tiru and her two younger sisters were happy for their parents when they left for Israel two years ago, and they held on to their hope and belief that one day, God would bring them to Israel too. That day finally arrived for the three sisters. Now Tiru and her family can leave behind their harsh life as refugees, where their tiny home had no electricity or running water, and the monthly rent was approximately \$50 (Ayinegida earned about \$2 for a full day of hard labor). In these circumstances, the only way they could survive was with help from their family already in Israel.

Now safely in the Land, the family plans to work hard and ensure their children's education. They know their faith in God is justified, and if the miracle of Aliyah can happen, then surely more miracles are in store.

Many more Jewish families need our help to make their way to Israel. What a joy to witness this great prophetic ingathering of the Jewish people as promised in God's Word—and be a part of it!

Please continue to give generously towards the ICEJ's Aliyah efforts as we keep reuniting Jewish immigrants with their families here in the land promised to them. 🌍

DONATE TODAY AT: www.icejusa.org/aliyah



Help Bring Home Another Flight of Ethiopian Jews

BY DAVID PARSONS, ICEJ VICE PRESIDENT & SENIOR SPOKESMAN

The ICEJ welcomes new flight of Ethiopian Jews at Ben Gurion International Airport in June.

Some 20 years ago, thousands of Ethiopian Jews began leaving behind their fields and villages and hurrying to Addis Ababa and Gondar to hopefully board one of the flights taking this ancient Jewish community home to Israel. But many ended up stuck in transit camps, where they have languished. This was around the time when Facebook and the first iPhone came along. So while the world has been racing ahead into an age of instant global connectivity, these Ethiopian Jewish families have remained in limbo, ever longing to reach the promised land. Thankfully, we can do something to change that!

Israel has committed to bringing home up to 3,000 Ethiopian Jews before the end of 2022 as part of its ongoing emergency airlift known as Operation *Tzur Yisrael* ("Rock of Israel"). To help achieve that goal, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is looking to

Mura, a term for Jews forced to convert to Christianity several generations ago to keep their jobs. But they continue to identify with the Jewish people and faith and have close relatives already living in Israel. So in 2015 the Israeli government approved the resumption of Ethiopian Aliyah to reunite these separated families.

Since then, the Christian Embassy has sponsored Aliyah flights for more than half of the Ethiopian Jews (2,750 out of 5,347) brought to Israel over the past seven years.

Our latest sponsored flight landed in June with 160 Ethiopian immigrants on board. An ICEJ delegation at Ben Gurion Airport welcomed them and witnessed prophetic promises being fulfilled. But we also witnessed first-hand many tearful embraces revealing the deep pain these families have endured from being split apart for so many years.

Many more Ethiopian Jewish families urgently need our help to reach Israel. With financial support from relatives in Israel, some have found decent housing and sent their children to school while they wait for approval to immigrate. But the conditions continue to worsen for those still living in the transit camps. Often their homes are tin shacks without electricity or running water. As a result, many have trouble finding work and get taken advantage of because they want to leave. In addition, the nation has been hit hard by COVID, civil war, drought, and famine.

Your financial support for our next planeload of Ethiopian Jews will help us cover the flight costs and various pre-flight expenses: transportation and security needs, Hebrew lessons, medical attention, and interview and documentation costs—as well as urgent integration assistance once they arrive in Israel.

Please give generously toward our upcoming Aliyah flights for Ethiopian Jewry—it is truly time to bring home the last remnant of Ethiopian Jews. 🇮🇱



sponsor Aliyah flights for many of these Ethiopian Jews scheduled to arrive in the coming weeks and months. This is our chance to work together to help them make it to the Jewish homeland.

The remnant of Jews still left in Ethiopia was previously prevented from coming because they were considered *Falash*

GIVE TODAY AT: www.icejusa.org/ethiopian-aliyah/



ICEJ Helps Ethiopian Immigrant Students Finish High School

BY CHRIS CHAMBERS

Recently, an ICEJ team visited the village of Ibim near Sderot in Southern Israel, founded in 1953 as a collective farm. Today Ibim serves as a student village for Ethiopian and Russian immigrant families with children studying at the nearby Sapir Academic College.

We were there to witness the pre-graduation ceremony of 22 Ethiopian immigrants earning the equivalent of a high school diploma. Most of the graduates were in their early 20s and were just one test away from completing a nine-month education program sponsored by the ICEJ.

Eldad Shauvat, director of the absorption center, addressed the students first, explaining that through this "Israel Academy," they were being given a dream start to integrate into Israeli society. He also thanked them for having the heart to study and pursue success in their new country.

The ICEJ's Yudit Setz, representing the Ministry of Education, had similar words of encouragement while urging the graduates to

keep their unique culture alive in Israel. She also thanked the Jewish Agency, ICEJ donors, teaching staff, and others who had a hand in making this program possible.

"This is a pilot program—and now we hope to help many more who will come," said Yudit. ICEJ's Vice President for AID and Aliyah Nicole Yoder also had the chance to address the graduating students.

"As did your forefathers, you will need to overcome many challenges ("giants") as you settle here in the Land. However, with faith and perseverance, you will overcome—and are already overcoming—by completing this study course. We at the ICEJ and our many Christian friends around the world are happy to offer you this open door, and we wish you well as you find employment, build homes, and begin life here."

Launched in December 2021, the new program has given students a high school standard of education in only nine months. Their curriculum includes mathematics, computers, civics, and extra Hebrew lessons, and their diploma will help them pursue opportunities like vocational training or further academic studies.

The course is open to Ethiopian newcomers aged 18–35 who arrived with 8–11 years of education. While financial pressures tempt new immigrants to forgo education and begin earning what money they can, these students chose to forgo a paying job. It will pay off down

the road in better job opportunities after their required army service.

"It was a tough start, and I am very happy it is done," said Mekonan, a young 20-year-old man with drive. "I hope to become a computer technician and work in hi-tech."

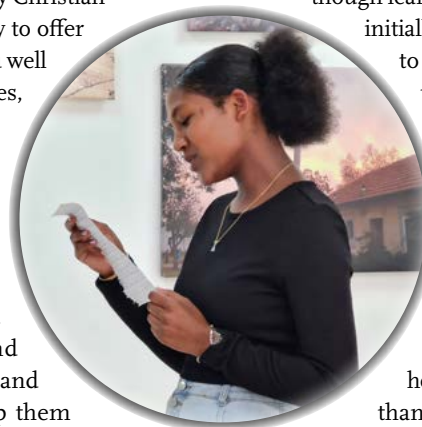
Tekikil Tzega, a 20-year-old who recently arrived with her brother, shyly smiled when she shared her aspiration to become a medical doctor so she can help people.

Adesa Daraso, also 20 and living in Ibim, spoke with beautiful Hebrew on behalf of her fellow Ethiopian students. She admitted that though learning Hebrew was initially tough, she loves to learn and hopes to become a nurse once her IDF service is over. She arrived in Israel with 10 years of schooling and believes this program will give her better prospects than her older sister, who had only 6 years of education and currently works in a factory.

These young Ethiopian Jews are now optimistic about their future—and our support for this program shows how the generosity of Christians is providing hope and practical support for these young men and women beginning their new life in Israel. You, too, can help make a real difference by assisting the next group of arrivals! 🌍



ICEJ's Nicole Yoder addressing a group of Ethiopian students



Donate today: www.icejusa.org/donate-immigrant-assistance

HOMECARE BRINGS HOPE TO TROUBLED FAMILIES IN SOUTHERN ISRAEL

It is still early morning. Birds are singing, and the sun has just greeted a new day as Corrie van Maanen and a colleague from ICEJ Homecare begin their rounds. They start early to avoid Jerusalem's busy morning rush-hour traffic. Once a month, ICEJ Homecare heads south to Arad and Beersheva, in the Negev desert, to visit, strengthen, and comfort Jewish immigrant families in need. Homecare works to build relationships with those we care for by responding to their needs—and sometimes, it takes years to develop that rapport.

About 18 months ago, Ada lost her husband after many years of illness, suffering, and multiple hospital visits. Ada took care of him with love, perseverance, and what little strength she had since she also had serious health issues. But she forgot about her own needs and put her emotions aside. As a result, she fell into a deep depression when her beloved husband passed. The years of only giving had taken their toll. The curtains of Ada's small apartment stayed closed. The television became her companion. She feared everything outside her home and did not want to leave.

Because of her relationship with ICEJ Homecare, built so carefully over the years, we continued our monthly visits. Emotionally, Ada did not have the strength to talk with us. Our monthly visits stopped at the front door and were very short. But we continued visiting her, month after month. We prayed for the complicated situation and encouraged Ada as best we could. We knew with the right help from a doctor and her children, things could turn around.

After a year-and-a-half, Ada finally opened the

door for us again, and a little ray of hope sparked her depressed heart. We came in, listened to her heart, and heard her say: "I do want to get better, to be able again to reach out and help other people."

Several times she expressed her thankfulness that we never forgot or gave up on her. Our visits—though short and just to the front door—had meant a lot to her. After spending time in her home once again, we left with our hearts filled with joy and hope. Yes, more healing is still ahead for Ada, but she has hope again.

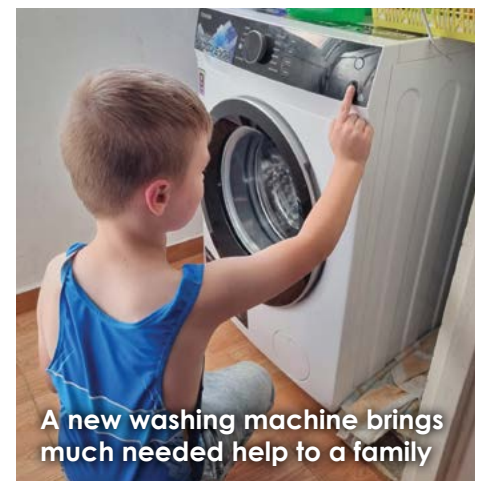
We moved on to see a single mother whose youngest son knew we were coming and was jumping with excitement. He greeted us with big hugs. For this mom, however, life is filled with challenges. She and her three young children live on the third floor of an apartment building with no elevator. We stood at her side, listening to her stories.

Since the war broke out in Ukraine, she constantly worries for her parents, her brother, and her brother's family, who are all close to the fighting. They cannot leave, and when she hears their reports of agony and distress from the war, it only adds to this young mother's anxieties.

Not long ago, she called us, panicked: her washing machine had stopped working and could not be repaired. With her small income, she could not afford the unexpected costs of a new washer. But she could not live without one, either—not even a week—so Homecare quickly responded to her need. We returned

to Beersheva that same week, took her to an appliance store, and—thanks to generous Christian donors—bought her a new washing machine.

"This machine is quieter than a windmill," her little son said as he examined the new washer. Meanwhile, his mother was in tears with thankfulness.



A new washing machine brings much needed help to a family

These are two of many stories from ICEJ Homecare visits where we try to love and bless needy Jewish immigrants in Southern Israel. We are grateful to our faithful supporters—with your help, we can keep doing this precious work the Lord has given into our hands. 🌍

**Please continue to support
ICEJ Homecare at:
www.icejusa.org/homecare**

YOUR ISRAEL ANSWER

Why Christians Support Israel: Legal Reasons

Part 4 of a 5-Part Series

By Dr. Susan Michael, ICEJ USA Director

Enemies of Israel attempt to convince us that Israel is an illegitimate, colonialist project in which foreigners moved in, took land, and forced a state upon the locals. The truth is that Israel's founding has a firm basis in international law and was established through the same legal process behind the founding of every other country in the Middle East. To question Israel's legality, one must question countries like Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, and Iraq, to name a few.

Continual Jewish Presence in the Land

A quick overview of history will reveal that Jews have maintained a continuous presence in the land of Israel for more than 3,000 years. Their connection to Jerusalem goes back almost as far. The city is mentioned close to 700 times in the Hebrew Bible and has been the Jewish people's capital since the days of King David.

Under the Roman Empire, however, the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple were destroyed. Many Jews were killed, others fled, and more were forced out. This was the beginning of an exile that lasted 1,900 years, during which more than 100 generations of dispersed Jews prayed three times a day to return to Jerusalem. Even so, a small number of Jews had remained and maintained a presence in the holy city and other areas of the land. Israel's founding, therefore, was by the descendants of an indigenous people joining those who had maintained a presence in their ancient homeland.

Palestine

After its destruction in AD 70, the Romans rebuilt Jerusalem as a pagan city, renaming it Aelia Capitolina. They also changed the name of Judea to Palestina. Their goal was to remove all Jewish connection to the city and the land. The Roman Empire eventually

became Christian, and the region of Palestine became peppered with churches. In the seventh century, however, Islamic forces took the area, and for the next 1,300 years, Palestine was in the very center of one Islamic empire after another. However, Palestine was a small, insignificant region that these empires ignored and neglected.

Breakup of the Ottoman Empire

In WWI the Ottomans sided with Germany and lost, so their empire was divided between the British, French, and Italians. Borders were drawn and leaders put in place to govern the new nation-states. The borders, however, were drawn with no regard to the people on the ground, which has resulted in many a skirmish to this day.

The Hashemite Arabs of Arabia had helped the British defeat the Ottomans—as depicted in the movie *Lawrence of Arabia*—and when the war was over, the British owed them favors. They were given territories outside of Arabia as payback.

British Mandate over Palestine

The area of Palestine fell under the British mandate, and the 1917 Balfour Declaration had already stated Britain's intention of establishing a homeland for the Jews there. In 1920 the San Remo Conference transformed the Balfour Declaration from a letter of intent to a legally binding foundational document of the mandate. In 1922, 52 nations of the brand-new League of Nations formalized the British mandate, including the Balfour Declaration.

Hashemite Emir Feisal, the premier leader of the Arab world, also supported a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He acknowledged that the Zionists would enhance the economy of the entire Middle East. In return for his backing, he asked for his own state in Syria. When the French reneged, he withdrew support—and even opposed—the Zionist endeavor.

In 1922 the British betrayed the Jewish people, and 78 percent of what the League of Nations had designated as “the national home of the Jewish people” was broken off and presented as a gift to Abdullah (Feisal's brother) for an Arab state. The remaining 22 percent designated for a Jewish homeland was inhabited by both Jews and Arabs, and tensions were increasing between the two populations as Arabs opposed Jewish sovereignty.

United Nations Approves Statehood

The League of Nations morphed into the United Nations in 1946 and was soon given the responsibility of finding a solution to the problem of Palestine. In November 1947 they passed a resolution to partition the area, with one part designated for a Jewish state and the other for an Arab state. The Jews accepted this plan and declared statehood in May 1948. The Arabs rejected it and declared war.

In 1949 Israel was admitted into the United Nations with a majority vote, thereby placing a stamp of approval upon her founding and acceptance into the governing organization.

Same Legal Process Created Entire Middle East

Every country existing today in the Middle East was founded after 1920 and according to this same legal process: Following the 1918 breakup of the Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations sanctioned mandates to the British, French, and Italians, authorizing them to establish independent nation-states, and those new states were then ratified and accepted as members of the United Nations.

Therefore, we can boldly support the existence of Israel because its founding was completely legal and formulated by the community of nations. 🌐



BY DR. SUSAN MICHAEL, ICEJ USA DIRECTOR

I was a workshop speaker at a Christian conference several years ago, and the topic was the history of Israel. In my short 20-minute message, I quickly reviewed how Israel was founded and the major wars and developments up to today. Afterward, a young man—probably a college student—approached me. Scratching his head and with a puzzled look, he said, “But I thought Israel was founded on stolen Arab land?”

It's a common accusation and misunderstanding—but a critical one to disprove because if it is true, the very founding of Israel is illegal. How could Christians support such a thing? Let's consider a few facts to get to the truth.

MARK TWAIN'S OBSERVATIONS

The famous travel writer and author of *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain, went to the Holy Land in 1867 and documented the empty barrenness of the land in his book *The Innocents Abroad*. Here are a few of his observations:

There is no timber of any consequence in Palestine—none at all to waste upon fires. ... It is a hopeless, dreary, heart-broken land ... Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies.

Palestine had been at the heart of successive Islamic empires for almost 1,300 years. Other writings from the nineteenth century confirm it had been neglected and taxed into a barren wasteland. Most of the small farms had gone bankrupt and were bought out by large absentee landowners living in Damascus, Beirut, or Cairo.

Jerusalem had a majority Jewish population squeezed into the Jewish quarter of the walled Old City. In the late 1800s, Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia arrived, and farming settlements began to form, which produced jobs that drew Arabs to the area. An unskilled Arab worker in Palestine could make five times more than his relative with the same job in Cairo or Iraq.

POPULATION GROWTH

Israel's population increased from 700 thousand to 1.7 million from 1922 to 1945. Muslims made up the largest segment (60 percent in 1945). Their numbers had increased roughly 500 thousand, as had the smaller Jewish population. Both communities were growing at about the same rate.

JEWISH LAND PURCHASES

Most Jewish land purchases were made through organizations and involved large tracts of land belonging to absentee landowners. Much of the land was uncultivated and swampy, rocky, or sandy. Nevertheless, Jewish organizations were willing to pay exorbitant prices. For example, rich black soil in Iowa sold for \$110/acre while Jews paid \$1,000/acre for arid and semi-arid land in Palestine.

1948 LAND OWNERSHIP

The State of Israel was founded in 1948 largely upon public land passed from the Ottoman Empire through the British Mandate to the newly founded Jewish State. Only 30 percent of the land was privately owned by Jews and Arabs. Some of those Arabs remained and became citizens of Israel. Other Arabs fled and abandoned their property thereby losing title to it.

WHY SOME ARABS ABANDONED THEIR LAND

Arab residents fled for several reasons, but most did so voluntarily. Many followed the call to flee by neighboring Arab leaders who claimed they were sending in armies to destroy the Jews in a bloodbath. Though that did not happen, there was still a war—and people often flee for safety in times of war. In some instances, Jewish fighters forced them out for security reasons.

REFUGEES

Once the fighting was over, the approximately 500–700 thousand Arab refugees who had fled Israel found themselves on the losing side. They had sided with Israel's enemies and were not allowed back in. Today, fewer than 30,000 of those refugees are still alive, but their children and grandchildren still live in refugee camps because their own Arab leaders refused to absorb them and give them a future.

Additionally, 700 thousand Jewish refugees were forced to leave their homes and properties in Arab countries and make their way to Israel when the nation was born. They left behind homes, properties, and businesses with nothing but the coats on their backs. The difference is that Israel absorbed them into society and made them citizens. Even though their large number strained the new state and roughly doubled the size of the Jewish community in Israel, they were cared for and became productive Israeli citizens.

Israel's founding was legal and upon public lands previously part of the Ottoman Empire. The accusation that it was founded on stolen land is based upon a small percentage of properties abandoned by fleeing Arab owners. The unnecessary loss of their homes was certainly an injustice of war as was the loss of properties abandoned by Jewish owners in Arab countries. The greater injustice in this story is Arab leaders did not, and have not, absorbed the Arab refugees into their countries. 🌍

OUT OF ZION PODCAST

Dr. Susan Michael is USA Director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and host of the *Out of Zion* podcast. Listen to her Israel Answers series on the *Out of Zion* podcast to learn more about Israel and related issues.

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