



WORD

FROM JERUSALEM



THE GENTILE ROLE IN THE

Restoration



OF ISRAEL



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,

Jeremiah 24:6–7 states: “I will bring them back to this land ... Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.” We are truly witnessing something in our day that only God could orchestrate as Jews from around the world return to Israel in droves, and I can't help but think that we are seeing part of Jeremiah 24:6–7 play out before our eyes.

The Jews are indeed returning to Israel, but their last-days restoration will involve more than just a physical return. All the prophets agree that a spiritual return to God will follow Israel's bodily return. In this month's issue of *Word From Jerusalem*, you'll learn more about this two-phase return to the Land (pp. 4–6) and how we are witnessing the physical restoration of Israel with amazing accuracy in our day. In addition, you'll read about the dramatic increase in Jewish immigration this year, affirming God is indeed faithful to His promises in His Word to bring His people home (pp. 10).

Finally, you'll read about our role as gentile believers in all this and consider how the increase in Jews and Christians building new friendships based on respect and admiration ties all this together.

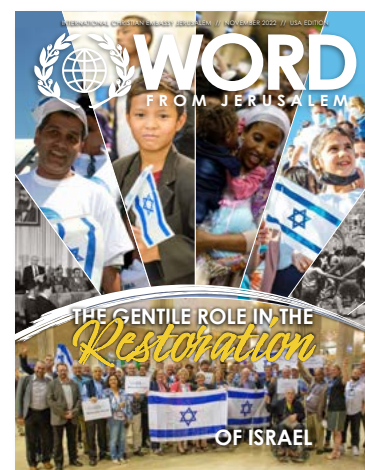
As Aliyah increases and new requests for help come to us from all over Israel, our work in Jerusalem and our branches worldwide continues to expand. We are thankful to God and all of you who support us in prayer and finances. I hope this issue of *Word From Jerusalem* is a blessing and inspiration to you!

In the love of Christ!

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
President
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

COVER PHOTO: **Bottom photo:** ICEJ national directors greet a flight of new immigrants.

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THE GENTILE ROLE IN THE *Restoration* OF ISRAEL

BY DAVID PARSONS
ICEJ VICE PRESIDENT & SENIOR SPOKESMAN

Israel today is a remarkable country. Though small and threatened on all sides, it is nonetheless making major contributions to the world, such as in hi-tech and biomedical advances. Many of the world's largest companies are investing billions of dollars in Israeli start-ups and setting up Research & Development (R&D) offices here, which is crucial to their future success in the global marketplace.

Israel is also leading the way in agricultural innovations and water conservation. For example, it pioneered drip irrigation and currently recycles over 90 percent of its wastewater, far outstripping any other nation. And although more than half its land is still arid desert, Israel exports high-quality farm produce in all seasons, even while its neighbors must import food to feed their populations.

The Israeli people are also blessed with one of

the most nutritious food supplies in the world. In a recent global survey by the Bloomberg news agency of the world's healthiest countries, Israel ranked an impressive sixth, a full seven spots ahead of the legendary food-producing nation of France and far ahead of the United States at number 33.

A few years ago, I heard one of Israel's chief rabbis share a fascinating story about a group of Russian farmers who had come to Israel to learn how this nation's farmers were able to produce such high-volume and high-quality yields. When they asked how many kilos of apples Israeli orchards produce per acre, they were shocked when their Israeli counterparts said it was best to speak in terms of tonnage, and not just kilos. Incredibly, the Israeli orchards were producing 10 times as many apples as those in Russia.

Yet the Land of Israel was not always so

fruitful. ... In fact, the land lay desolate for all the centuries of Jewish exile, and in both Christian and Muslim lands where the Jews were dispersed, they were largely forbidden from owning land. This meant they had basically lost the ability to farm and had to rely on the gentiles to feed themselves. This was true even up to some 100 years ago when Jews first began to return to the Land of Israel and try to scratch out a living in the barren fields.

The Law and the Prophets had warned the ancient Israelites that this would be their fate if they turned their backs on God. The land itself would "vomit out" those inhabitants who turned to wickedness (Leviticus 18:28), and the fields would lie desolate in their absence (Jeremiah 18:15-17).

Meantime, the Jewish people were also told they would be scattered among the nations and would never find a place to rest their feet

(Leviticus 26:26–39; Deuteronomy 28:64–67). The sword would follow after them (Jeremiah 24:10), and they would bear the reproach of famine while in exile (Jeremiah 14; Ezekiel 5).

But God also promised that one day He would come and find His people, no matter how far they had been scattered, and return them to the land promised to Abraham and his descendants as an “everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8). This promise of a future restoration is spoken of by all the Hebrew prophets and is affirmed by all the great covenants of the Bible.

The Promise of Restoration

Throughout Scripture, Israel is promised a last-day restoration in the land. This promise rests on the faithful character of God—that He can be trusted to carry out His promises because He cannot lie. This is especially true if it is a covenant promise sworn by divine oath.

- In the Abrahamic covenant, we find the election of both the people and the Land of Israel for the purpose of world redemption. The two would merge to become a “great nation” which, over time, would bless us with all the things we need for salvation (Romans 9:3–5).
- In the Mosaic covenant, the relationship between the Land and people of Israel is regulated by their spiritual standing before God to show forth His holy and righteous character. Yet any separation of the people from the land as a divine corrective measure would always be followed by a return to the land in God’s timing (Leviticus 26:40–45; Jeremiah 31:10).
- In the Davidic covenant, we are assured that one day the people and Land of Israel will be reunited and restored beyond that which King David had built. In fact, it will be an everlasting kingdom presided over by a promised Messiah, the Son of David, who will rule from Jerusalem over all the earth in righteousness and peace.
- Finally, in the new covenant, Jesus proved His Messianic credentials through His perfect obedience even in enduring a cruel death on the cross (Philippians 2:5–11). Thus, he earned the right to sit on the throne of David forever and rule over the earth from a restored Israel—and now no one can ever challenge His right to rule.

Some Christians question whether Israel is promised restoration in our day. They contend it was either forfeited or already fulfilled in the earlier returns under Ezra and Nehemiah. Or they say the New Testament does not support this idea, and therefore, Christians can ignore Israel today as a political accident or as the result of a “man-made Zionism” lacking God’s handiwork.

Yet by the time the New Testament was written, the Israelite hope of restoration was such a prevalent idea that the Jews even minted coins in the first century expressing their longing “for the return of Zion” or “for the redemption of Zion.” This hope was largely based on the promises in the Davidic covenant, beginning with 1 Chronicles 17, that God would establish the throne of David forever and that Israel would one day have eternal rest from all its enemies in its own land.

Throughout the Psalms and the Prophets, this promised restoration is expounded upon repeatedly and is often expressed in such terms as the Lord will “bring back the captivity of Zion” (Psalm 126:1); “restore the fortunes of Jacob” (Nahum 2:2; Isaiah 49:6); or “show favor to Zion” (Psalm 102:13). It also can be clearly found in such passages as Isaiah 2, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36.

And finally, this promised end-time “restoration” of Israel is indeed vouched for in the New Testament, such as in Jesus’ specific words in Matthew 19:28 and in Peter’s preaching in Acts 3:21. In Romans 11, the apostle Paul further assures us of a future ingathering and acceptance of the Jewish people that ends with all Israel being delivered from their sins by a Redeemer who will “come out of Zion” (v. 26).

A Two-Phase Process of Restoration

All the prophets agree that Israel’s last-days restoration would involve a two-phase process. First, there would be a physical return to the land followed by a spiritual return to God—that is, Israel would return to the land in unbelief for the purpose of coming to belief.

Both Zechariah 1:3 and Malachi 3:7 express this two-step process in simple terms: “Return to Me and I will return to you.”

Hosea 6:1–3 also speaks of Israel’s return, or *tshuva* (repentance), leading to God’s return to them.

Jeremiah 24:6–7 states: “I will bring them back to this land ... Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.”

In Jeremiah 32:37, 40 the Lord promises: “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever ... And I will make an everlasting covenant with them ... and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart, and with all My soul.”

And in the clearest picture of this two-phase process of restoration, Ezekiel 36 declares: “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you ... I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations” (vv. 24–30).

For more than 100 years now, the world has been witnessing the physical restoration of Israel to her land with amazing accuracy. The people are returning to rebuild the waste places of Judea and plant vineyards once again on the mountains of Samaria. The land is yielding its fruit once more, the desert is blossoming like a rose, and the people are being restored to health.

Indeed, the “reproach of famine” has been removed from the Jewish people in an incredible way, and Israel has become a land of plenty. Not only does it have one of the healthiest diets in the world today, but every year the nation’s farmers are somehow producing greater yields with less water.

Now consider again that even within the past century, the Land of Israel was still barren—and that only 70 years ago, Jews under Nazi occupation in Europe faced mass starvation and death. Thus, the transformation of the Land and people of Israel in just a few generations



ICEJ national directors greet a flight of new immigrants.

is nothing short of miraculous. And if we see the promise of Israel's physical restoration being fulfilled with such remarkable precision, it means we can completely trust God for their spiritual restoration as well.

Gentiles: Partners in Restoration

Another core feature of the promised restoration of Israel in the last days is that it would be marked by gentile assistance. The same Hebrew prophets who foretold of a time when God would set His hand a second time (Isaiah 11:11) to finally regather the scattered Jewish people back to their homeland also foresaw that gentiles would be involved in this restoration.

This is made especially clear by the prophet Isaiah, who repeatedly speaks of God bringing "the wealth of the gentiles" to a restored Israel. The prophet assures, "The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you" (Isaiah 60:10). He adds that "the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet" (Isaiah 60:14).

It is hard to find a more apt description of the modern-day phenomenon of Christians coming in humility to aid and assist a people whom our forbearers in the faith once oppressed. Isaiah also proclaims: "Behold, I will lift My

hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples; they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders; kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers; they shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me" (Isaiah 49:22–23).

This particular passage opens with an unusual Hebrew phrase that has been interpreted in various ways in modern English translations of the Bible, including that God would "beckon" or "wave" or "whistle" to the gentiles. In other words, it is the sort of very loud and visible gesture one makes to flag down a taxi. God has not kept this as a little secret that He only shares with a few dear saints in their prayer closets. Instead, He is out on the street corner shouting at the gentiles to get involved in the restoration of Israel.

Thus we Christians have little excuse when we fail to answer that call in this day when it is so obvious that God Himself is gathering the outcasts of Israel.

And the fact is that gentile kings and queens have indeed contributed greatly to the Zionist cause. In 1865, for example, Britain's Queen Victoria

gave royal patronage to the founding of the Palestine Exploration Fund for the purpose of settling Jews back in their ancient homeland. The British crown later endorsed the Zionists' national aspirations in the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

Meanwhile, American presidents—such as John Adams, Woodrow Wilson, and Harry Truman—openly supported Israel's restoration.

Today, gentile Christians are still partnering in the great return of the Jewish people back to their land, knowing that it eventually becomes a spiritual return to their God. Therefore, the question is: What are you doing to help with Israel's restoration?

Conclusion

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem offers many ways in which you can be involved in the great restoration of Israel in our day (see pp. 14–16 of this issue of *Word From Jerusalem*). Whether it is through our Aliyah efforts, assistance to new Jewish immigrants, various social AID projects to the diverse peoples throughout the Land of Israel, global prayer initiatives, or many other ministry activities, you can be a part of repairing the breach, healing the historic wounds, and humbly telling the Jewish people they are home for good! 🌍

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The Planting of the Lord

BY NICOLE YODER, ICEJ VICE PRESIDENT FOR AID & ALIYAH

Aliyah means “to go up” in a spiritual as well as a physical sense. Hidden within this Hebrew term is the 2,000-year yearning for Jerusalem and Zion that the Jewish people have passed on from generation to generation in exile. The term “Aliyah” is used in Genesis 50:13–14 in reference to Jacob’s bones being brought up from Egypt for burial in the Land of Israel.

Having personally experienced the challenges of moving to a new country where everything changed in one short flight, I know how difficult it can be. Usually, potential immigrants carefully plan months (or years) before making such a move. First, they must deal with the bureaucracy of submitting paperwork to determine eligibility. Then they ideally take time to learn about options and plan where to go live or work or attend school. Arrangements for a host of other practical details must be done before actually getting on the plane. And landing in Israel is only the beginning of the journey.

But what happens if you scarcely had time to pack or make any plans at all?

Sisters in Need of Support

There are many facets to helping a new immigrant flourish in a new land. Irina (21) was in her last year of university and her younger sister, Lada (16), had not yet completed high school when their mother woke them up one morning to tell them words Irina never thought she would hear: “We are at war!”

“It was like a dream,” explained Irina. “I only had a half-year left to get my diploma. ... Now we do not know what to do, because both my sister’s school and my university were bombed. We do not know what will happen in the future.”

Initially, the family remained at home anxiously following the news. But eventually they sheltered with other families in the storage rooms of the local supermarket where her mother worked. When the electric company was bombed a week later, they were plunged into darkness.

At this point, the girls’ mother decided it was too dangerous for them to remain. Although she felt that her responsibility as the manager of the



New immigrant from Ukraine

supermarket required her to remain behind, she arranged for her daughters to escape by train—which was loaded to double-capacity—through Kharkiv to the Polish border. The ride took 24 hours, but they made it to Poland and eventually on to Israel.

Regarding her future, Irina says: “I have finished my education. I’m an engineer. I have studied ventilation, air conditioning, and heating, and I hope I can continue to work in my profession. I do not know if it is possible now that my university has been bombed, and I have not received my diploma.”

become discouraged and seek to leave again, which disheartens others from attempting to come. This rooting process requires giving the “tree” nourishment and care. This care may come in many forms, such as assistance with housing, learning the language, vocational training, or recertification of professional credentials. Some immigrants need help closing education gaps. Basic needs in the form of a gift of household items or practical mentoring from local natives can make a crucial difference for a family seeking to adapt successfully in Israel.

The ICEJ gladly steps in to help provide it. The needs vary in each situation, but our aid is a tremendous source of comfort and assistance for bewildered and overwhelmed immigrants. Some require help in multiple ways, whereas others need only an initial push in the right direction and then can move forward independently.

Thanks to the generosity of our friends worldwide, the ICEJ’s Aliyah work provides essential aid for all the stages of Aliyah, including the crucial integration phase. Assistance with flights is a joy and a privilege, but we also are there to help address the

Separated from family and worried about loved ones left behind, Irina and Lada needed support with the basics after making Aliyah. We gave them welcome gift baskets and sponsored a program that offered them a place to stay, Hebrew classes, and assistance to prepare for their next steps in Israel. Ironically, this includes preparation for army service, which every young Israeli person is required to do. Imagine their parents’ relief knowing their daughters were safe, cared for, and had people to help them even though they could not be there in person to advise and assist them.

The Gentile Calling to Help

Many Christians over the years have given generously to ease the challenges of Aliyah because we know that the Lord calls the gentile nations to help (see, for example, Isaiah 49:22–23). However, God’s call to “carry their sons and daughters on our shoulders” involves much more than just providing some pre-Aliyah informational seminars and covering the cost of a flight with extra luggage allowance. It also entails helping each one become “planted” in their native land, something the Lord says He will do “with all [His] heart and soul” (Jeremiah 32:41).

This integration phase of being planted and rooted in Israel is crucial. Without it, an immigrant is doomed to an ongoing struggle—many



New Immigrants at an informational seminar receive a gift bag.

often-larger challenges awaiting these new immigrants once they get off the plane. 🌍

HELP PLANT MORE JEWISH FAMILIES IN THEIR PROMISED LAND OF ISRAEL
Support ICEJ’s Aliyah efforts today at: www.icejusa.org/aliyah

ALIYAH HITS 60,000

Jewish Immigrants to Israel in 2022

BY ICEJ STAFF

The Israeli Ministry of Aliyah and Integration has published official statistics that 60,000 new immigrants have arrived in Israel this year, the highest number in more than 20 years. And it expects another 4,000 by the end of the year.

This 128% increase from 2021 is remarkable, especially considering the global pandemic and Moscow's recent efforts to hinder Jews from leaving Russia. It brings glory to the God who continues to honor His promises to regather Israel: "For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land" (Ezekiel 36:24).

"It is amazing to see the rising Aliyah figures for 2022 and over recent years," ICEJ Vice President & Senior Spokesman David Parsons told *All Israel News* recently. "The global pandemic could not stop the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, and neither can the Russian government's threats to close the door to Jewish immigration to Israel. In fact, it is only stirring more interest in Aliyah from all the former Soviet republics."

In the coming weeks ICEJ will assist an additional 100 Ethiopian Jews with flights and pre-flight needs, 100 Ukrainian immigrants, and 57 immigrants from other former Soviet republics. This will bring our ICEJ total to more than 3,000 this year, which includes more than 1,000 Jewish immigrants from Ukraine and 260 from Ethiopia.

A closer look at the official data reveals that most of the recent surge in Jewish immigration to Israel is due to the Russia-Ukraine war. Roughly 40,000 of the newcomers since late February were from those two countries. Between January and the end of August 2022, 47% of new immigrants to Israel were from Russia, and 25% were from Ukraine.

Jews arriving from Russia tend to be whole families, but those from Ukraine are primarily mothers, children, and the elderly who fled the war since men of combat age are required to stay and defend the country.

This presents various challenges to providing the love and support necessary to help each immigrant fit into their new life in Israel and start contributing to society. One way we have helped involved sponsoring several Aliyah summer camps this past year designed to help Jewish youths from the former Soviet republics prepare for their eventual move to Israel. We have also helped cover immigrants' flight costs, basic aid and food packages, student learning programs, dental health care, and, of course, much wider integration needs they will face.

Through the international Naale program—which enables Jewish teenagers from around the world to study and complete their high school education in Israel—and with the ICEJ's help, another large group of Jewish students from the former Soviet republics recently arrived to continue their education. Most of those students, aged 14–16, will make Aliyah after graduation, and 68% of their parents will follow shortly after.

According to the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, most (63%) immigrants to Israel in the last year were of working age, which could boost Israel's economy. Some 27% were between 18 and 35 years old; 21% were between 36 and 50; and 15% were between 51 and 65. Children made up 23% of the newcomers—and the rest were people 66 and older.

We are witnessing a miracle in our day that echoes Jeremiah 31:17: "There is hope in your future, says the Lord, that your children shall come back to their own border."

God is bringing His people home to Israel, and the ICEJ is well-placed to assist in this great prophetic ingathering. With the help of our donors worldwide, we can meet the challenges and needs that arise, even before they set foot in the land—despite wars, pandemics, and any other hindrances. What a privilege it is to witness this historic return of the Jews! It is humbling to be a part of the response to God's command to the nations to carry the Jewish people home on our shoulders and in our arms and plant them in the land with all our hearts (Isaiah 49:22). 🌍

ALIYAH STATISTICS 2022

Worldwide Jewish Population

15,000,000

Israel's Population

9,600,000 million

Jewish Population by Country

Israel 7,069,000
 United States 6,000,000
 France 442,000
 Canada 394,000
 United Kingdom 292,000
 Argentina 173,000
 Russia 145,000
 Australia 118,200
 Germany 118,000
 Brazil 91,000
 South Africa 51,000
 Hungary 46,500
 Ukraine 40,000
 Mexico 40,000
 The Netherlands 29,700
 Belgium 28,000
 Italy 27,000
 Switzerland 18,800
 Uruguay 16,300
 Chile 15,800
 Sweden 14,900
 Turkey 14,300
 Spain 12,900
 Austria 10,300
 Panama 10,000

Jewish Immigrants to Israel by Country (from January to September 2022)

Russia 47%
 Ukraine 25%
 United States 6%
 France 4%
 Ethiopia 2%
 Other countries 12%

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics; Prof. Sergio Della Pergola of Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Zvika Klein, *The Jerusalem Post*, "Aliyah up 128% this year, with 60,000 new immigrants in past Jewish year," September 19, 2022, www.jpost.com/aliyah/article-717539

Support ICEJ's Aliyah efforts today at: www.icejusa.org/aliyah



ICEJ HAIFA HOME RESIDENTS Enjoy Rosh Hashanah Celebrations

BY YUDIT SETZ, ICEJ HAIFA HOME DIRECTOR

As Israel's long, hot summer wound down and the air began to cool with the entrance of fall, the atmosphere at ICEJ's Haifa Home felt different too. The Holocaust Survivors residing in our Home knew that the time of the Jewish High Holidays was here. Here at the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors we celebrate the fall holidays in many ways.

This year, two weeks before the actual *Rosh Hashanah* holiday in late September, an advertising analysis company, *AppsFlyer*, treated the Haifa Home residents to a delightful Rosh Hashanah picnic along the Kishon River.

It was a fun day out, and residents enjoyed delicious pastries and fruits. In addition, *AppsFlyer* employees arranged for a dance floor to be set up, and many residents took the opportunity to dance and enjoy the afternoon with the company's staff. What joy for all!

"They already invited us several times before and remember us well. It's nice to see the same people again. Total strangers in the beginning have now become friends to us," remarked Rachel.


"The effort they put in for us truly amazed me," added Renate. "Not only did they provide all this but they were also interested in my life and listened to my story."

While the residents were enjoying their day out, back in Haifa, our staff had been preparing a Rosh Hashanah celebration for them. When the residents entered the community dining room to celebrate the Jewish New Year, they were greeted by beautifully set tables.

Along with the customary prayers, residents also enjoyed a special festive meal with all the traditional foods for this holiday.

It was an exciting time also for all our new residents from Ukraine, who were celebrating their first Jewish New Year in Israel.

Residents who are still able to visit relatives celebrated this holiday with their families. Still, enough wanted to celebrate it together at our Home to fill the room.

Caring for these Holocaust Survivors and impacting their lives is a privilege. Thank you for considering a generous gift toward the work of the ICEJ's Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors. 

Support the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors at:
www.icejusa.org/haifa

Israel: God's Banner to the Nations

BY SUSAN MICHAEL, USA DIRECTOR

The Jews have survived centuries of persecution solely because of God's hand of protection over them. In our day, we can see they have not only survived but thrived—and returned home to the same land promised to them through Abraham. There is no explanation for this except a biblical one. ... God would bring Israel back to the Land a second time.

After their 70-year captivity in Babylon, the gentile King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple (their first exile and first return). But after Rome sacked Jerusalem in AD 70, the Jews were exiled a second time—this time throughout the known world. Jews have been scattered from one end of the earth to the other ever since.

The modern-day Jewish return to the land is the second return. Let's revisit a familiar verse in Isaiah:

In that day the Lord will reach out his hand *a second time* to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the Mediterranean. (Isaiah 11:11 NIV, emphasis added)

Notice that Isaiah's prophecy of this second return is not just from one nation—as in the first return from Babylon—but from many nations. But then, in verse 12, there is a profound detail not to miss:

He will set up a *banner for the nations*, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:12, emphasis added)

In this return, Isaiah said God will raise a banner (some translations say “ensign” or “flag”) to the nations. In the original Hebrew, the word for “banner” is *nēs*, which means “Something lifted up, a standard, a signal, or a sign.” A “banner” often signaled victory in a battle. In Isaiah 11:12, God's act of setting up a “banner for the nations” may carry a twofold message to the nations that is both positive and negative.

God Is Faithful to His Word

First, seeing Israel return to the land a second time affirms God's victorious power and His great faithfulness. This return, which is nothing short of a miracle, is a rallying call to the nations to get on board—God is on the move! Believers worldwide are rejoicing in God's faithfulness to the Jewish people, knowing that if He keeps His promises to Israel, He will keep *all* His promises.

The regathering of the exiles is a “banner” (sign) for believers that God is mighty and victorious, and we can trust Him because He is faithful and true to His word. What an awesome show of God's power and goodness for all to see and be drawn to.

God Will Judge Nations That Oppose Israel

However, for nations opposed to God and what He is doing, God's banner is also a warning: He will fulfill His promise to protect Israel and bring her home, but He will also keep His promise of a coming day of reckoning for those nations that oppose her. In Joel 3 God makes this warning to Israel's enemies clear:

For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land. (vv. 1–2)

Judgment *will* come to the nations that have treated the Jewish people poorly.


In Matthew 25 Jesus said that when He returns, He will judge the nations based on their treatment of His brethren, the Jewish people:

All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the

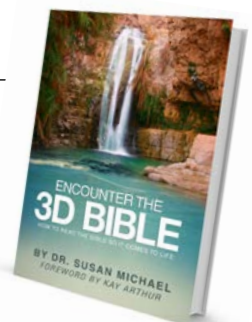
foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.”

Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.” (vv. 32–40)

In this passage, Jesus described gathering the nations before Him as “sheep and goats” and said that from His throne, He will judge *both* based on their treatment of His “brethren.” He will bless the “sheep” nations that blessed Israel. But to the “goat” nations that did not bless His brethren He will say, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (v. 41).

Some Christians read this parable and apply it in a general sense to the needy or the poor. Yes, Jesus cares about the needy and the poor! But in context, Joel 3 and Matthew 25 indicate that judgment is coming to nations based on how they treated His brethren—the *children of Israel*. It is important to interpret Matthew 25 and the parable of the sheep and goats in the context of Jesus' Bible—the Old Testament—in which Joel and Zechariah had prophesied hundreds of years earlier. Judgment is coming to nations based on their treatment of God's people: Israel. 

The above article is excerpted from Susan Michael's new book releasing in December 2022, *Encounter the 3D Bible: How to Read the Bible So It Comes to Life*.

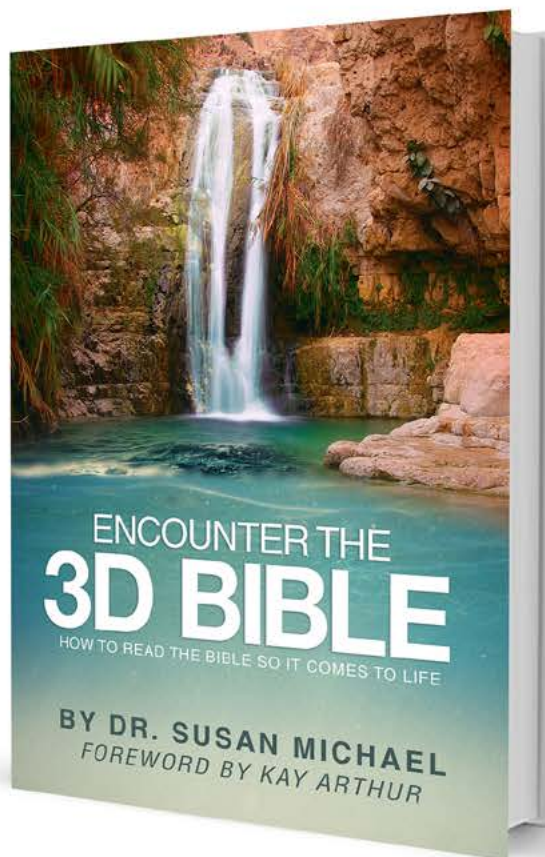


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This holiday season don't miss the opportunity to do something deeply meaningful for someone in need through one of ICEJ's impacting projects. Here are some creative ideas:

- Let your kids or grandkids participate in choosing who to help
- Collect an offering as a small group or Bible study and be part of establishing a bomb shelter
- Forego some family gifts and redirect those funds to assist families coming home to Israel

Keep reading to explore all the ways you can share the spirit of giving!

ALIYAH Help Jewish Families Come Home



With antisemitism on the rise and a shaky economy, the need for Jewish families to make Aliyah to Israel is more critical than ever. In Isaiah 49:22, the Lord invites the gentile nations to participate in this great ingathering back to the promised land. When you support ICEJ Aliyah, you play a crucial part in this prophetic fulfillment by helping needy Jewish families come home and thrive.

Your gift toward Aliyah helps with:

- Travel costs to Israel
- Basic needs upon arrival
- Absorption costs—introductory classes to Israeli language, culture, and society

"Thus says the Lord God: 'I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.'"
(Ezekiel 11:17)



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Make a profound difference in the life of a Holocaust Survivor residing at our assisted living home. When you give to this fund, you join a team of dedicated caregivers who look after these Survivors' daily needs.



"It is wonderful to live at the Haifa Home.

Each holiday is celebrated for at least two weeks.

Children are coming, soldiers, police, and other groups to celebrate the holidays with us. The Haifa Home is one big family."

—Naomi (88) has lived at the Haifa Home for 7 years



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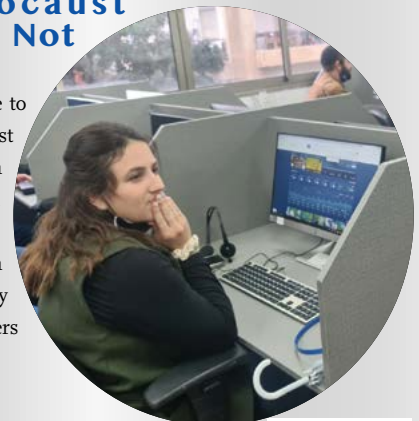
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HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS' CALL CENTER Ensure Holocaust Survivors Are Not Alone

Extend love from a distance to thousands of elderly Holocaust Survivors struggling with loneliness and painful memories. The call center operates 24 hours a day on weekdays and is manned by staff and community volunteers from across Israeli society.



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ING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

HELP HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS FROM UKRAINE

The unexpected influx of 16 new residents who are at the same time new immigrants from Ukraine brings with it many challenges and extra costs. Among many other necessities, we need to:



- Buy furniture for new immigrants' rooms that adapt to their medical conditions
- Finish the new building, which includes installing an elevator, building a room on the third floor, and furnishing the top floor
- Initiate a garden project in all buildings
- Organize trips to help these new immigrants become familiar with their new country

"That's why we're grateful to be in the Haifa Home and in Israel. We feel so loved and welcomed here. They take wonderful care of us, and we are so happy to be here."

—Maya (84), a new immigrant from the Ukraine who came to the Haifa Home in July 2022



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Average cost per person per year: **\$2,500**
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Jewish families in Southern and Northern Israel live in constant fear because of frequent rocket attacks. Simple things like going to the market or school or engaging in outdoor activities require the ability to reach a bomb shelter within 10 seconds when an air raid siren sounds. When you gift a bomb shelter or help share the cost, you bring hope and peace to people in dire need.



"We feel safer. [With the bomb shelters], children can go outside knowing they can find shelter when the rockets start."

—Ofir Libshtein,
mayor of the Sha'ar
HaNegev Regional
Council, Southern
Israel



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Average cost per bomb shelter: **\$26,000**
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ICEJ AID Touch Lives and Provide for Basic Needs

When you give to ICEJ AID—the Embassy's social assistance and benevolence ministry—you participate in touching people's lives in every sector of Israeli society. Some of our projects include:

Provide Basic Food Items

Increasingly in Israel, families struggle to make ends meet—and many are below the poverty line. Gifting a food basket makes a profound difference for families during the holidays or any time of year.

"The LORD has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall take refuge in it."
(Isaiah 14:32)

www.icejusa.org/aid



SUGGESTED GIFT \$100

Support Orphans, Children, and Youth-at-Risk

Many Israeli youth have no family or are at-risk. Your gifts to ICEJ AID allow us to assist this neglected segment of Israeli society by providing:

- Playground equipment
- Mentors
- A comfortable, safe, loving, and supportive environment
- Help transitioning to adulthood and preparing for college and careers



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\$250 (helps assist a child for one year)
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Partnership in ministry is a gift God gives to strengthen and undergird His work. Become an Ambassadorial Partner with the ICEJ at a giving level of at least \$100 a month. In appreciation, you will receive everything in the Covenant Partnership level, plus:

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Isaiah declared the Lord will call Zion's walls "salvation" and her gates "praise" (60:18). As we walk together side by side, the ICEJ invites you to become a Builder of Zion Partner at a giving level of \$2,500 a year or more. In appreciation, you will receive everything in the Ambassadorial Partnership level, plus:

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YOUR ISRAEL ANSWER

Jews and Christians Learning to Relate

Part 1: The Return of Christianity to Its Jewish Roots

By Dr. Susan Michael, ICEJ USA Director

For the first time in almost 2,000 years, Jews and Christians are learning how to be friends and relate to one another with respect and appreciation. To fully understand how new and how delicate this relationship is, we must know our history and what has brought us to this moment.

If charted out graphically, the history of Jewish-Christian relations would look more like a circle that is about to be completed but still has an open gap. The beginning of the circle some 2,000 years ago is from the time of Acts 2 when the early church was born and was an internal sect of the Jewish faith.

The various stages of the relationship included a separation into two totally separate faiths who then became enemies. Over the last 500 years the trajectory began to change, and the circle began to close as a large segment of Christianity returned to its biblical foundations. While we have made tremendous progress in mending the breach that was our history, we still have a way to go before it can be described as repaired.

Early Jewish Christianity Becomes Increasingly Gentile

Today, most Christians understand Jesus was Jewish, as were his disciples, the apostles, and even all Christianity. This is where the early church and our journey begins. All that we hold dear as Christians came through the Jewish people, and the better we understand the Jewish roots of our faith, the stronger our Christian faith becomes.

The early Christian movement—known as “The Way”—was entirely Jewish for almost 10 years after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The book of Acts chronicles early tensions between the mainstream Jewish community and the early believers in Jesus. In fact, there were times when Jews persecuted the apostles for preaching Jesus. For example, Steven was stoned to death, and when a Jewish mob sought to kill Paul, the Romans put him into custody in Caesarea to save his life. But at this point, these were internal squabbles within Judaism.

Within a few years, gentiles began to join the early church, and tensions surfaced within the movement itself—between the Jewish believers in Jesus and the gentile converts coming in from the pagan, Roman society. Many of Paul’s epistles address matters of disagreement between these different groups inside the early church.

As Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, it endured periods of intense persecution. As long as it had been a sect of the legal Jewish religion, the believers were safe. But this became impossible as the two faiths developed quite separately from the other. Christians were not just persecuted by zealous Jews but also the Roman authorities.

In addition to an ideological separation, the two faiths also became separated geographically. After Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70, the headquarters for the Jewish faith moved north into the Galilee at Yavne; Jewish leaders began to look inward as they focused on the survival of Judaism while in exile and without a temple. The headquarters for the Christian faith began to develop in Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome, where churches and their leadership were quickly becoming less Jewish and predominantly gentile.

Christianity Severed from Its Roots

Once the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in AD 312, everything changed for Christians. The once-persecuted faith became the official state religion. The church now had political power and lost its spiritual purity over time.

Early church fathers took advantage of their power and began to preach against the Jewish religion. It was time to get back at the Jews for their rejection of this new faith and draw a clear line of distinction between the two religions. This line of demarcation actually severed the Christian faith from its Jewish roots.

The apostle Paul had warned against this very thing in Romans chapters 9–11. He admonished the believers in Rome to guard against arrogance and honor the Jewish roots of their faith. He likened the relationship to a tree of faith that Christians had been grafted into as wild olive branches. Christians were to be mindful that they were merely branches and it was the root supporting and nourishing them. If only the early church fathers had heeded Paul’s warning. Over the centuries the sermons against Judaism developed into antisemitism that condoned maltreatment of the Jewish people as “Christ-killers.” Because of the political power of the state church, antisemitism produced centuries of anti-Jewish legislation, persecution, ghettos, and even expulsions. The Jews were often forced out of one country into another, only to be later expelled from there as well—often by a king who was also the head of the state church.

Christianity Begins to Find Its Roots

The very thing that brought about a major change and began the closing of our circle of history was also strongly resisted by these same state churches—the translation of the Bible into the common languages. William Tyndale was executed for his English translation, which was then adopted by the church of England several months after his death at the stake.

Once the people could read the Bible for themselves, not only did the church lose its control over them, but they discovered the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. They learned that Jesus was Jewish, and they found the Bible was full of prophecies that one day the Jewish people would return to their ancient homeland. They began to pray for that return, and a whole movement of Protestants in Britain became known as Restorationists because of their expectation of the restoration of the Jewish people to their land.

Numerous preachers taught about this future restoration of Israel, and over the years, several key individuals were involved in that return. A few examples are Rev. Hechler, who befriended and assisted Theodore Herzl; Lord Balfour, who penned the Balfour Declaration; Prime Minister Lloyd George, who was in office at the time of Balfour; General Orde Wingate, who trained the Jewish troops in Palestine; and many others.

While Christianity was making this tremendous and slow turnaround, Jew-hatred developing from an entirely different place: the Nazi movement in Germany. While Nazism had its own strange beliefs opposed to Christianity, Hitler knew how to silence the church in Germany: by distributing their antisemitic teachings to justify his plan of a final solution.

The Jews had already started returning to their homeland, and Christianity itself was finding its ancient biblical roots, but not quick enough. Six million Jews died in the Holocaust, and centuries of Christian antisemitism had made it possible.

Thankfully, the story does not end with the Holocaust, and much has happened since then to mend this breach between Jews and Christians. We will discuss this great turnaround in Part 2 of this series on Jews and Christians Learning to Relate. 🌍

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