

May/June, 2000

A Word from Jerusalem

"Your sons will come
from afar, and your
daughters will be
carried in the arms."

Isaiah 60:4b

Newsletter of the
International Christian
Embassy Jerusalem



Letter From the Director

Dear Friends,

There seems to be much emphasis at the moment among believers in different parts of the world on the concept of Christian repentance for the sins of the Church against the Jews. This issue was at the forefront during the recent pilgrimage of Pope John Paul II to Israel, a visit that was closely followed by the Israeli public and drew a mixed reaction (see inside). It is interesting that many intercessors worldwide sense in their spirit that—at this Millennial change-over in time—it is something which could really have a dramatic impact on the Jewish people.

On the very morning the Pope toured Yad Vashem, the Embassy hosted our friend Sister Pista, from the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary in Darmstadt, Germany. Those who are aware of their ministry know that intercession and repentance have been at the core of the message and activities of this order of Protestant sisters since their founding shortly after the Holocaust.

Sister Pista spoke at the Feast three years ago, and out of that presentation a video was made that went all over the world and led many churches and prayer groups to hold repentance services. In the last few months, in Ireland, South Africa and Switzerland, meetings were held to especially ask the Lord for forgiveness for specific actions against the Jewish people before and during the Second World War, when many countries closed their doors to Jewish immigration.

On her recent visit, Sister Pista presented a moving document she has written to serve as a model for such a repentance service. It includes suggestions on the use of appropriate music, and mentions specific actions — or lack of actions — taken by different nations regarding the Jewish refugees trying to flee from Nazi persecution. Few remember that many Western democracies are guilty of having a restrictive quota system, or of closing their doors entirely to the entry of endangered Jewish people.

In one of several other examples, we just received a similar message from a couple from Tennessee which urged:

“You are in an excellent position to call the Christians of the world to publicly repent for the sins of the ‘Church’ against the Jews. It is time to heal the deep wounds inflicted by the adversary of the Jewish soul in the name of Christ.”

“As Daniel confessed in proxy for the sins of all Israel, the remnant of the Church which has truly been born of the Spirit must vicariously accept the responsibility for the ungodly and anti-Semitic words and atrocities perpetrated by Christians in the name of our Lord. We must ask for forgiveness from God and the entire Jewish community. It doesn’t matter that we were not personally responsible for the sins of the Church against the Jews...”

During our recent deliberations concerning next year’s Biblical Zionist Congress, we decided to have a repentance service at Yad Vashem included in the agenda of the Congress, to be held in February 2001. We call on our intercessors to pray that we will hear the voice of the Lord clearly in what more may be done to truly touch and mend the hearts of Jewish people.

In this newsletter, you also will find a report on the difficult situation now facing thousands of Christians in south Lebanon, a matter that requires immediate prayer and attention. Please consider what you might do to urge responsible leaders in your countries to take serious, humane measures on their behalf.

In addition, we have included some encouraging stories from our Social Assistance and Soviet Jewry departments. These are vital aspects of our ministry which, everyday, are making a significant difference in the lives of so many families and communities in Israel. We trust you will see yourselves as an essential part of what the Lord is doing through us here to bring smiles to troubled faces, and restore hope in the Holy One of Israel.

The Christian Embassy has often stated that we are at the service of other ministries who look to be a blessing to this nation. You can also learn about both the recent Prayer Breakfast for Israel and a special Prayer Gathering for Israel, led by Breaker of Dawn Ministries, which the Embassy was privileged to host recently.

Meanwhile, preparations are well underway for this year’s Feast of Tabernacles. At this stage, everything points to a record participation, which will be very appropriate for the Feast of 2000 and the Embassy’s 20th anniversary celebration.

May we use this opportunity to again thank our supporters for standing with this ministry. Without your prayers, intercession and financial contributions, we would not be able to maintain such a strong, positive witness here on the front lines at such a significant and climactic time in world history.

We bless you from Jerusalem, in accordance with the promise of God to bless those who bless the seed of Abraham.

Yours in Christ Jesus

Johann Lückhoff

South Lebanese Anxious About Future

With an IDF withdrawal looming closer every day, tens of thousands of Lebanese in the security zone in south Lebanon face an agonising decision — flee their homeland or stay and face harsh reprisals. Israeli leaders are offering to take some in, but most of the zone’s residents prefer to remain in their homes under international protection and eventually reunite peacefully with their Lebanese brethren. They are clinging to faint hopes that Western nations—so averse to the plight of refugees—will undertake the responsible measures needed to prevent Syria and its terrorist proxies from exacting revenge and fomenting another refugee crisis.

Anxiety among the resilient south Lebanese community has grown in recent months, especially after the Israeli Cabinet officially decided to end its costly 22-year presence in the security zone by July. In the wake of failed American efforts to broker peace with Syrian dictator Hafez al-Assad, Israeli leaders have decided to speed up those withdrawal plans under the cover of UN Security Council resolution 425, although nervous Western diplomats are still trying to exhaust any chances for a deal that would ensure an orderly evacuation. But Damascus wants any such agreement to also include a complete surrender of the Golan Heights.

The prolonged waiting game is taking its toll on the south Lebanese community, a mix of over 100,000 Maronite Christians and Shi’ite Muslims who first banded together in the late 1970’s—with the blessing of Beirut—to form the South Lebanon Army. Their common aim was to combat lawless PLO forces trying to conquer the area and launch terrorist attacks into Israel - a subversive campaign that flung the country into a destructive, 15-year-long civil war. The 2500-man SLA then allied with Israel to confront invading Syrian troops and their proxies—the radical Islamic terrorist groups Hizb’Allah and Amal.

After fighting—and dying—for peace in their scenic hillsides, most of the residents consider themselves true Lebanese patriots and would find it hard to leave their homes. But Hizb’Allah has vowed to punish them as “traitors,” and the Syrian puppets in the Lebanese Government are likely to stand aside while it happens. The primary target will be members of the SLA, especially its Christians. The local militia’s top officers have already been sentenced in absentia to death or life imprisonment. Meanwhile, weekly trials in a Beirut military court have been handing out routine two-year jail terms to ordinary SLA conscripts—although a worse fate probably awaits many of them. In addition, thousands of others who have worked inside Israel or had other contacts with the “Zionists” also are at grave risk.

Israeli leaders are asking foreign countries to grant asylum to any SLA troops who want to leave. As a last-ditch measure, Israel also says it is willing to offer refuge to endangered SLA soldiers and their immediate families, and officials are frantically looking for potential housing in northern cities like Naharyia or Metulla, or in kibbutzim and smaller villages.

In a show of appreciation for how they have stood by Israel, residents of the border town of Metulla and a kibbutz association have announced private initiatives to take in some of these families in an emergency situation. Any who do flee probably wish to stay near the border so that when the situation stabilizes in Lebanon, they can easily return to their homes.

“We are their last hope,” says Miriam Hod, who runs a hotel in Metulla that employs several south Lebanese. “I can’t even begin to tell you how terrified they all are... I think that the state of Israel has a moral obligation towards these people. There is going to be a massacre there.”

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**“Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”
Proverb 27:6**

Residents of the exposed Israeli border town of Metulla have offered to give emergency refuge to some of the imperiled south Lebanese families.



We are His Hands – SAP Report

In the ICEJ's Social Assistance department, we are privileged to be the hands and voices of Christians worldwide that desire to comfort and encourage the people of Israel in practical ways. Because we live here and know the Land so well, we are able with the Lord's guidance to carefully select among many deserving projects. Sometimes Christian organisations outside Israel choose to use our know-how and entrust their local outreach to us. One such ministry is the Christliche Missionsdienst (CMD) from Burk, Germany, which works mainly with poor children in the Far East, but also is concerned for the poor and needy in Israel.

In early March, some of our SAP staff travelled with three representatives of CMD for 6 days to different parts of Israel, blessing many needy Israeli families and newly arrived immigrants. Arrangements were made through Israel's Ministry of Social Welfare and other organisations, and we went to peoples' homes to personally deliver financial support and speak words of support. They all seemed overwhelmed and deeply moved that Christians from abroad desired to help and bless them without any strings attached.

One such lady was "Esther," who arrived from Ethiopia with her husband many years ago. They had five children, but she suffered terribly from brutal physical abuse and finally fled with her children to another town. Esther is a warm, loving mother who works very hard to support her family, but she is just not able to make ends meet. Her earnings do not cover the bills, forcing her to take out loans and she cannot seem to get out of this vicious cycle. The landlord constantly threatens to evict them. The abuse has left Esther with a sad demeanor. But when CMD offered to pay most of her bills and her loan for the rent, sunshine broke out on her face and tears of joy filled her eyes. "When the children come home from school," she said, "we will celebrate together and thank God for His wonderful provision!"

Seven young families from Yemen have arrived recently in Israel. At the Beersheva Absorption Center they learn Hebrew and are prepared for entering Israeli society. The Yemenite Jewish community is very religious and close-knit, and their customs have changed little over the years. These families reminded us so much of the pictures we have seen when the Yemenite community came in large numbers some fifty years ago. They still arrive destitute and start their lives again from nothing.

We brought them different household items and linens. Following our presentation, other Yemenite Jews already well

established here organised a party in their honour. In a speech to the gathering, the Director of the absorption centre emphasised everyone's responsibility in helping their Jewish brethren return to the Land as the prophets foretold. He also acknowledged the very special part Christians have played, and expressed his deep gratitude for it.

Travelling further north, we met "Hannah" in a community in Samaria. Hannah emigrated from Peru with her husband seven years ago, and as young newlyweds they found work and began to build their lives together in the Land, just as they had dreamed of doing. But when Hannah was pregnant with their third child, her husband suddenly died of cancer at the age of 29. When we met Hannah, this third child was just 2 months old. In our time together there was sadness, but finding that people she had never met cared enough to visit and bring practical comfort in her difficult situation brought tears of joy.

We met "Miriam," a deeply religious mother of 10, in another community in the green hills of Samaria. Miriam and her husband "Aaron" worked hard in their own business for many years to support their growing family. But the business failed, leaving them with many debts. The strain was so great that Aaron suffered a breakdown and is still unemployed. One of their children is severely handicapped and with no real educational framework available in the town, Miriam is not able to leave the home to

Everything they had built up throughout their lives was lost and they came with just one suitcase (for seven people).

work. Our financial help was a tremendous blessing to this family, and strengthened their faith in a loving and caring God.

On our last day, we met Jews who had arrived just two months ago from Iran. They had suffered much hardship there and finally left in secret. Everything they had built up throughout their lives was lost and they came with just one suitcase. "Avraham" arrived with his family of seven. In Iran, he had owned a shop, but had lost everything. After learning Hebrew, he will have to find work here to support his family, which will not be easy. The financial support we gave these families was tremendously appreciated and probably will never be forgotten.

After six intensive days, we had much peace and joy in our hearts. We rejoiced in God's faithfulness in bringing His people home. But we also felt privileged that as Christians from different ministries and backgrounds, we could help ease their burden and participate in planting them in the Land with words and deeds that were of great comfort to them.

(As requested, we have not used real names in these stories.)

Photo Gallery of People You Have Helped

These photos are by courtesy of our Social Assistance and Soviet Jewry Departments



Front Cover Photo: A Yemenite Mother and her baby, recently arrived in Israel.

Showing the God of Israel Cares— SJ Report

Ever since Jews from the former Soviet Union began streaming into Israel in 1989, many Christians have responded to the prophetic call in Scripture, such as Isaiah 49:22, to help bring the Jewish people home. In this time, the ICEJ has assisted more than 50,000 Jews and their relatives to make *aliyah* from the “land of the north.” This work is now expanding into such vast regions as Siberia. Perhaps less known, but certainly no less important, has been the Embassy’s assistance to new immigrants after they arrive here. The Hebrew prophets not only declared God’s plans to bring His people home on the “shoulders” of Gentiles, but that these Gentiles also would serve as “foster fathers and nursing mothers” as God fulfills His promise to plant them in the Land with “all His heart... and soul.” (Isaiah 49:23, Jeremiah 32:41) This is the primary goal of the Embassy’s Soviet Jewry Department, which since 1990 has touched the lives of multiple thousands of new Israeli immigrants, as they face the immense challenges of starting again in a strange new land.

Headed by former attorney Jim Schutz, the Soviet Jewry staff currently includes three native Russian speakers and three nurses who also speak some Russian. While the nurses engage in a daily program of basic homecare for sick and elderly Russian Jews, the other team members respond to a never-ending variety of needs and requests from immigrants who contact the Embassy. Many hear of us through word of mouth, a social worker, or perhaps a newspaper article, and telephone or make their way here to one of our three weekly open visiting sessions. On exceptionally busy days, as many as thirty people may show up for personal interviews. (See photo, top right on page 5.) Every month, at least 100 different individuals or families receive some kind of material assistance for dental work, eyeglasses, hearing aids, schoolbooks, furniture, medicine, food or other needs.

According to Jim, personal attention is a hallmark of the department’s ministry. “Quite a few people have come to us in desperate situations,” he says. “Some have been facing possible eviction by their landlords, some have been unable to buy food for their families, and others are simply overwhelmed by one problem or another. We want them to know that the God of their forefathers truly cares about them and wants to fulfill His promises in their lives.” This sometimes leads to home visits and the development of warm personal relationships. The immigrants are often very surprised, and therefore very appreciative, to find such support from Christians in the Jewish homeland.

For example, Irena and Igor recently moved along with their eight-year-old daughter into an empty Jerusalem flat. All their available money was needed to pay advance rent. Other than a single mattress, they had no furniture or major appliances. We were able to buy a good used refrigerator and

arrange the delivery of a donated sofa-bed and kitchen stove. We even found good bedding and dishes for them. They were overwhelmed and hardly knew how to respond. This gave substance to our claims that God’s promises were real and He really would plant them in the Land as they look to Him. Shortly thereafter, Igor found a job.

Russian immigrant Dimitry, 26, is a medical student in his last year of studies. The only way he could pay for his education in Israel has been through his wife’s job. This fall, however, his wife had a baby, and now cannot work. And Dimitry was not able to work and complete his final year of medical studies at the same time. Sadly, he could not find any government or private help. He came to us quite desperate, fearing he was about to lose all he had invested into becoming a doctor. When we were able to assist him, the result was great joy and thankfulness. He said he had no idea such people existed here in Israel.

Recently, we were contacted by an Israeli woman who volunteers to help newcomers in Maale Ephraim, in Samaria. The grandmother in a newly arrived family was bedridden due to cancer. (See photo on page 5.) They also desperately needed a washing machine, but could not afford one. We bought a used one in good condition and delivered it to the home. The family expected to pay for it, and could hardly believe it was a gift. Despite her suffering, the grandmother was radiant. She was so happy she had come home to Israel. They did not expect to meet Christians who believed in the power of the God of Israel “who heals all your diseases.” (Psalm 103) Seeing that we were sincere, the grandmother happily received our prayers. Now we have a list of other families there who are in need.

In another place, we have been introduced to two cousins, their wives and small children who recently made *aliyah* from the Ukraine. (See photo on page 5.) Happy to be in Israel and hopeful concerning their future, all four parents are busy learning Hebrew. To minimize expenses, both families live together in a small, two-bedroom flat. But they too are in need of a washing machine and other items. This is our opportunity to bless them.

Anja, who immigrated from Russia nine years ago, just gave birth to her first child in March. We have helped her with a number of needs during her pregnancy and afterwards. In special appreciation for the personal care of Olga Filenko of our staff, Anja named her new daughter “Olga” (meaning “separated for God”). We believe the Jewish people, too, have been separated by God for a special purpose, that their restoration will bring “life from the dead” to the entire world (Romans 11:15). Please help us continue this outreach to these precious newcomers, who are daily being rejoined to their land and heritage according to the eternal Word of God.

The Pope's Journey To Jerusalem

“But he who practises the truth comes to the light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.” John 3:21

The historic six-day pilgrimage of Pope John Paul II to Israel in March was welcomed by most — though not all — Israelis as a potent symbol of the significant changes that have taken place in Catholic-Jewish relations during his 22-year pontificate. Although the Vatican billed it as a spiritual journey to trace “the history of salvation,” many Israeli leaders hoped John Paul would use this first-ever visit to build on his positive record towards the Jewish people. Meanwhile, Palestinians were determined to score points of their own, forcing the Pope to navigate a political minefield at a crucial juncture in talks over the biblical heartland of Israel and Jerusalem.

While many Protestant denominations began revising their attitudes and doctrines towards the Jews decades and even centuries ago, the watershed event in modern Catholic-Jewish relations was the Vatican II conference in 1965. The Roman Catholic Church, confronted with the reality of a reborn Jewish state in the Land of Israel, had little choice but to rescind their anti-Semitic doctrine that God cursed the Jews to eternal wandering for killing Christ. But Catholic efforts to mend fences and purge the Church’s dark anti-Judaic heritage were slow and begrudging until Pope John Paul II took office.

John Paul II—a former Polish priest who witnessed the horrors of the Holocaust first-hand—has established an unprecedented papal record of goodwill towards the Jews. He was the first pope to declare anti-Semitism a sin against God; to visit a synagogue; to affirm the right of Jews to return to their ancient homeland; and to confirm the enduring nature of God’s covenants with the “elder brothers” of Christianity. And it

was under his leadership that the Vatican recognised the state of Israel (though not Jerusalem as its capital).

Yet a series of polls before his visit indicated only a minority of Israelis were aware of these developments. Among those more informed, many felt this Pope needed to do more during his time here. Although he has apologised on many occasions for the hateful actions of individual

“sons and daughters of the Church” against Jews, the deep wounds inflicted by Catholicism on the Jews still linger. Thus, they expected him to express regret for the Roman Catholic Church’s collective responsibility for sowing the seeds of the Holocaust and remaining silent at its depths. Indeed, the Nazi regime—in passing the racist Nürnberg laws, forcing Jews to wear yellow stars and placing them in ghettos—was simply emulating actions which originated with the Catholic Church.

Thus, all eyes focused on the moment when John Paul II toured Yad Vashem—the nation’s revered Holocaust memorial—to pay homage to the six million Jewish victims of the *Shoah*. There he made a show of empathy for Jewish suffering that will be hard for many Israelis to forget, especially when warmly consoling a weeping Holocaust survivor who claimed he had once saved her life. The favourable impression was reinforced by a dramatic visit to the Western Wall, where he placed a prayer for forgiveness in a crevice.

These high-profile occasions were well-received and helped dispel some of the wide-spread ignorance of changing attitudes at the Vatican. But the Jewish memory will be mixed with disappointment over the Pope’s cautious apologetic message, as he broke no new ground.

Prime Minister Ehud Barak—who recalled that his own grandparents from Warsaw were sent to their deaths in Treblinka—accepted the Pope’s pleas but also made a veiled reference to the silence of Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust, noting that when the Jews “were led from all over Christian Europe to the crematoria and the gas chambers, it seemed that no longer could one place any hope in God or man... And the silence was not only from the heavens.”

Ultimately, the Vatican was more interested in protecting the self-image of the Catholic Church and Pius XII (who is up for beatification). Yet, this was not a time for mincing words and evading unpleasant truths. There is too clear a connection between centuries of Christian—primarily Catholic / anti-Semitic—teachings and the prevailing mindset in wartime Europe which allowed Hitler to single out the Jews for annihilation. As a result, many Jews were driven away from the Lord. In order to reach the heart of this people and help reconcile them to their God, Christians must be more willing to truly bear their souls about this dreadful past.



Photo Left: At Yad Vashem, Pope John Paul II stared silently into the eternal flame flickering in the dim, cool Hall of Remembrance, after laying a wreath on a slab where the ashes of Jews from six extermination camps are buried.



Above: In April, the Embassy co-hosted the 20th annual International Prayer Breakfast with The Religious Roundtable ministry of Ed McAteer.

Below: Jerry and Judy Ball with their intercessory team from Breaker of Dawn Ministries who conducted a special 4-day "Prayer Gathering" at the Embassy.



South Lebanese Anxious About Future

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But most in the south Lebanese community have weighed the dangers and bravely decided to stay put. Their only real hope for a peaceful life now lies with the UN or some other multi-national alliance that will send sufficient forces to guarantee their security. This was the desperate message which some 2000 south Lebanese Christians crossed over the border to deliver to Pope John Paul II at his recent papal Mass overlooking the Sea of Galilee. They also want such an international deployment to grant them autonomy until they can be reunited with Beirut—a scenario that can only happen if the Syrians are forced to leave Lebanon as well.

But recent threats from Hizb'Allah and Lebanese officials to continue the border conflict have certain Western powers seriously worried that they may be obligated to contribute troops to a dangerous peace-keeping mission in the void left by an Israeli pullout. The current contingent of UN monitors, UNIFIL, is weakly manned by smaller states, has severe budget shortages and is used as a shield by Hizb'Allah units. Only a strengthened multi-national force could assure quiet along the border.

Since the south Lebanese have no desire to become refugees in Israel or elsewhere, we are praying and urging that the international community will take the serious, humane actions needed to aid them in their current plight. Many Christians worldwide have faithfully supported Israel in word and deed over the years, but few have sacrificed alongside the Jewish people like the Lebanese Christians and others in the security zone. Let us trust the Lord together to move on the hearts of responsible world leaders to make the right moral and courageous decisions in the days ahead.



Above: Participants in the recent planning meeting for the 4th International Christian Congress on Biblical Zionism, to be held in Jerusalem, February 20 - 22, 2001, and sponsored by the ICEJ.

For more information,
contact your ICEJ Representative,
or the Jerusalem Headquarters.



**The 20th Anniversary of the ICEJ
and
the Feast of Tabernacles 2000
will be held
October 13 - 21.**



Don't Miss It!