

“Bringing God’s Chosen People Home”

A study of Christian Zionist strategies used to support and assist the State of Israel

Silje Belghaug Knarud



Master's Degree Thesis in History of Religion
60 Credits

Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages
UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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Abstract

In recent decades, growing academic attention has been paid to the Christian Zionist movement. ‘Christian Zionism’ represents the theological position of Christian that support the modern Israeli state and believe that this state will play a central role before the return of Jesus. Most of the research on Christian Zionism, as well as media comments, has focused on its apocalyptic aspects and its influence on foreign policy making in the USA. However, Christian Zionism is a global movement that is highly active also inside of the Israeli state. This thesis argues that more attention should be paid to how organizations, from the Christian Zionist movement, strategically work to settle Jews in Israel. By assisting in Jewish migration, these organizations attempts to restore the Promised Land with the hope of restoring Israel back to its biblical borders. By taking the onset in one Christian Zionist organization, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), the aim of this thesis is to explore the strategies used in order to bring Jews to Israel, but also the effects and potential consequences this might have. The ICEJ has been active in assisting Jewish migration from the early 1990s and has helped more than 115,000 (2014) Jews move to Israel.

The empirical foundation of this thesis is based on position statements, reports and articles published by the ICEJ. This material has proved the organization adapts a pragmatic approach in order to influence the Israeli society. By assisting in Jewish migration to Israel, the ICEJ has actively positioned itself in a central role in God’s providential plan. However, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is understood as a threat to the Jewish character of Israel, by the ICEJ. Therefore, the ICEJ is active in advocating for Israel in the international community. Through advocacy and by assisting Jews to Israel, the ICEJ hopes to preserve the Jewish character. The ICEJ’s work, as part of the Christian Zionist movement, has become a forceful actor inside Israel and also on a global scale. The impact the Christian Zionist movement has on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should not be underestimated.

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Abbreviations

CIPAC – Christian’ Israel Public Action Campaign

EU – European Union

FSU – Former Soviet Union

ICEJ – International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

IKAJ – Internasjonale Kristne Ambassade Jerusalem, norsk avdeling

NCR – New Christian Right

PA – Palestinian Authorities

PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organization

UN – United Nations

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1 Introduction

“Your decision, to found the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem - at a time, when we were left alone by others because of our faith - was a bold act and a symbol of your closeness to us. Your gestures and your acting gave us the feeling that we are not alone.”

Previous Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin
endorsing the International Christian
Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ 2013a).

For more than two and a half decade, Christian evangelicals, known as Christian Zionists, have been active in assisting Jews to Israel. With the Bible in their hands, Christians have sought up Jews in the Diaspora and encouraged them to move to the Promised Land. For these Christians, there is no distinction between biblical stories of Jewish exiles and the return of the Jews to Israel today. The Jews’ ability to establish a state in 1948 and their return from the Diaspora nowadays are seen as biblical promises are about to be fulfilled. By restoring the vast majority of the Jews to Israel, Christian Zionists expects the Second Coming of Christ.

While the international community and the surrounding Arab states are criticising Israel’s expansion on Palestinian Territories, these Christians defend this action and further contribute with financial support to the Jews who live in these settlements. This work has proved to be controversial in the eyes of the international community and local Palestinians, while the Israeli right-wing parties have found good use of their dedicated Christian friends. The Christian Zionist movement has advocated for Israel’s actions in the international community, while working actively within the Israeli society, where it has contributed with financial support and charity towards the Jews living in Israel in order to safeguarding a continued existence of a Jewish nation in the future.

This thesis will look further into one Christian Zionist organization, namely the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), which was established in Jerusalem 1980. The ICEJ promotes itself as an “Embassy for Christians around the world”, but has no diplomatic status as an embassy. The ICEJ’s relentless advocacy and support of Israel has been highly regarded by Israeli right-wing politicians. The most remarkable aspect of the ICEJ is perhaps its assistant migration work towards Jews in the Diaspora. Since 1991, the ICEJ has financed and brought more than 115,000 Jews to Israel in the hope of fulfilling biblical of restoring Jews to Israel. This thesis seeks to explore the strategies the ICEJ uses in order to assist Jews to Israel, is participating in a restoration of Eretz Israel as a Jewish nation, which is seen as Israel’s biblical right.

1.1 Aim of inquiry

This thesis will examine the phenomenon of Christians Zionists who help Jews to migrate to Israel in order to restore the state of Israel to its old biblical borders. I have chosen to call this activity, *assisted migration*, and my aim is to achieve a deeper understanding of the different ways in which Christian Zionists in the 21st century contribute in the restoration of Eretz Israel. I will concentrate on the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), which has been engaged in migration work since the early 1990s. I have chosen to study this organization because it has marked itself as influential within the Israeli society and works actively with assisting Jews to Israel, an aspect I was interested in exploring.

The main problem to be addressed is therefore as follows: *How does the ICEJ's strategy of assisted migration contribute to preserve (and affirm) Israel as a Jewish state?* The activity of Christian Zionists to ensure Jewish homecoming and the establishment of Israel in accordance with the biblical borders, is motivated by the belief in a re-establishment of Israel as a precondition for the second coming of Christ. This belief clearly collides with other interest groups in the modern land of Canaan where Palestinians and Israelis fight over the entitlement to the Holy Land. This conflict also splits the international community in its attempt to retrieve a peace solution. The ICEJ has made a clear stand on the Israeli side.

In order to answer my aim of inquiry I will address three research questions, which centres on the organization's *objectives*, its *strategies*, as well as the *effects* of its activities.

A proper understanding of the ICEJ's *objectives* and *goals* is essential to understand the ICEJ's conduct. The first research question is therefore: *How does the ICEJ conceive the biblical passages regarding the necessity of Jewish return to Israel and the preservation of Israel as a Jewish state as a part of a soteriological scheme?* I will here analyse the ICEJ's biblical understanding, on which the organization builds its work, and further examine how certain biblical passages are used to construct a narrative where the ICEJ takes executive action in order to achieve its theological goal.

Next, I will look at the *means* and *strategies* the ICEJ uses in order to assist the migration of Jews to Israel. I will here seek to answer the following question: *What strategies does the ICEJ employ in in order to assist Jews to Israel?* Here I assume the ICEJ needs cooperation partners in Israel who do not share its eschatological conceptions, but how do the collaboration partners regard these Christians? Israel is also a subject to critic from the International community, which could potentially pose a threat to the future Jewish character or result in loss of territories for Israel. The ICEJ is therefore active advocators for Israel in

the public sphere and I will see this as a parallel process in the ICEJ's strategic work to preserve Israel as a Jewish state in the future.

Finally, I will discuss whether the ICEJ's migration work and additional strategies has any *effect* on the preserving of Israel as Jewish state. I will here ask: *What effects does the ICEJ have or might have on the preservation of the Jewish state?* I will demonstrate the ICEJ's political influence in Israel and globally. The international community has raised some ethical dilemmas regarding such work that the ICEJ is involved in. I will therefore look into how the ICEJ responds to such criticism.

1.2 Clarification of terms

Christian Zionism is seldom used by the media or in popular writings because few knows what the term implies and it is often confused with the traditional form of Zionism, which is a more secular idea of a Jewish nationhood fronted by Theodore Herzl. Instead, Christian Zionists are referred to as *evangelicals*, *born again Christians* and *Protestant fundamentalists*, but these terms are vague and are not synonymous with Christian Zionism per se.¹ However, they are useful in the elaboration of the processes that led to Christian Zionism as a global movement, which will be further elaborated in chapter 2.

The term *evangelical* (meaning 'good news') is a generic term used to describe a rather heterogeneous group of Christians with a wide range of congregational belongings and political opinions. However, the congregations do share some characteristics, which according to Stephen Spector are the experience of spiritual rebirth (*born again*), higher authority of the Bible (with the Scripture as the actual word of God) and lastly sharing the word of God (proselytization) (Spector 2009, 36).

In this thesis, I exclusively refer to the *future premillennial dispensational* version of Christian Zionism. In this version of Christian millenarian thinking, it is believed Christ will return to earth when Jews have returned to the Promised Land and Israel is re-established in accordance with its biblical borders. *Premillennialism* refers to the thought where the Second Coming of Christ will happen *before* the millennium Kingdom will be established. This distinguishes from *postmillennialism* where humans must create the millennium, and Christ will return to earth *after* the end of the millennium and judge humankind. *Dispensationalism* refers to

¹ The notion of a Jewish restoration to Israel is also found in other major Christian denominations. E.g. there are Catholics who believes that the Jews remains God's chosen people and must return to Israel before the Second Coming of Christ, such as the organization *Catholics for Israel*. Some have also argued that Christian Zionists simply refers to Christians who supports Israel, without any eschatological motives (Spector 2009, 2-3).

an eschatological way of dividing human history into different dispensations (epochs or ages), within premillennial thinking. Humankind is now in the last dispensation (Church Age), and dispensationalists believe the return of Christ can happen at any moment. As a sign of the imminent return, true believers will be raptured up to “meet Christ in the air” while the people left behind will face the Tribulation. In the Tribulation most people will follow the antichrist, who will rule for about seven years. Then Christ will return defeat the antichrist and establish the Millennial Kingdom on Earth. Most Christian Zionists are dispensationalists. Christian Zionism therefore refers to the belief where the Jews must return to Israel and the Promised Land must be re-established before the return of Christ can take place.

I quite frequently use the two Hebrew words *aliyah* and *olim*, meaning the act of immigrating to Israel and immigrant in Israel. Aliyah with the reference to the Jewish immigration nowadays, are spelled with a capital A. The same distinction is used with the Jewish diaspora, where the contemporary diaspora is spelled with a capital D. The exact borders of Eretz Israel vary between different passages in the Bible, and the ICEJ is vague on the exact lines, because it stretches into surrounding sovereign national states (see Attachment Figure 1). I understand therefore Eretz Israel to refer to the land areas that God gave to Abraham in genesis 16:18 to be the ultimate Promised Land. The ICEJ has a more pragmatic understanding of Eretz Israel to be the Israeli territories between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea, included the disputed and Occupied Territories, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights. Though controversial, I use the term “Jewish state” in this thesis. The Declaration of Independence, Israel used the term ‘Jewish state’ when declaring the establishment of Israel. The Declaration further proclaimed full and equal citizenship for minorities (Ben-Gurion 1948). However, the exclusive Jewish character of Israel was not promoted by the state until the mid-1980s (Jamal 2013) Because Israel’s Jewish character is so essential for the ICEJ, I will use the term ‘Jewish state’.

I use the term, *assisted migration* to explain the whole process of how the ICEJ finds the Jews in the Diaspora, brings them to Israel and settles them within the Israeli society. The ICEJ uses the term *Aliyah-work* to characterise its activity. However, I find the term assisted migration being more suitable for explaining the whole process of this work.

1.3 Former research

While Israel and Zionism have been popular subjects in the academia, Christian Zionism has not been paid the equivalent attention, but has drawn more focus in the past two decades.

What characterizes the literature is a focus on the Christian Zionist movement's theological and political conceptions.

Central books here are e.g. the historian Barbra Tuchman's, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour* (1956), professor of history, Paul Charles Merkley's² two books *The politics of Christian Zionism, 1891-1948* (1998) and *Christian Attitudes towards the State of Israel* (2001).

Other authors have focused on the long lines of the history of Christian Zionism and have examined how Christian Zionism has developed and how it today is influencing American politics toward the Middle East. Such as professor of English, Stephen Spector's *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (2009), Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok's *The Politics of Apocalypse: The History and Influence of Christian Zionism* (2006), Timothy Weber's *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (2005) and the journalist Victoria Clark's *Allies for Armageddon* (2007).

Some theologians from mainstream churches³ have criticized the Christian Zionist movement by writing books where they have rejected the dispensational doctrine as heresy. The two most prominent authors within this branch are Stephen Sizer and Donald E. Wager. Wagner's *Anxious for Armageddon* (1996) and Sizers's *Christian Zionism: Roadmap to Armageddon?* (2005) are their most central books, but the two authors have also launched the website www.christianzionism.org, which aims to challenge Christian Zionism.

Some masters' students in Norway have done more specific research on the ICEJ, such as Reidar Bringaker's *Internasjonale Kristne Ambassade Jerusalem* (2013), where he accounted for the ICEJ's theology and how the ICEJ regards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and compared this with other Christian Zionist organizations in Norway. Hege Kristin Widnes' *Vi som elsker Israel* (2007), looked at the ICEJ as an apocalyptic organization, while she gave a scope of the ICEJ's theology and activities. Widnes' focus on the ICEJ's apocalyptic aspects provided useful information on how the ICEJ divides the world in good and evil. However, the thesis used theories about apocalyptic movements and concluded with placing the ICEJ within an apocalyptic frame. The ICEJ lies more emphasize on fulfilling biblical promises today, rather than End-Time events and therefore I found this theory to reduce the whole picture of the ICEJ. Arnt Vidar Klungland's *Vi peker – landet preker*

² Paul C. Merkley is also a board member of the ICEJ branch in Canada.

³ In this thesis, I will use the label "mainstream churches" on all non-dispensationalist denominations, because this is the term that also the ICEJ uses when it refers to Churches that does not assert to Christian Zionism.

(2005), wrote about the ICEJ's involvement in EU lobbies. None of these have had any special focus on the ICEJ's assisted migration work. My thesis has a much narrower topic within research already done on the ICEJ to fill in a hole by focusing on how the ICEJ actively contributes in preserving the Jewish character of Israel.

1.4 Theoretical perspectives

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how an organization works in order to preserve Israel as a Jewish state by assisting Jews to Israel and supporting Israel in the public sphere. I therefore need theories that can explain the underlying reasons for its work and how this work becomes meaningful for this organization. I have therefore borrowed some theoretical perspectives, which can highlight the way the Christian Zionist organization acts the way it does. I have selected pieces of these theories that suits to my theoretical perspective of this thesis. My aim is to highlight how the ICEJ *conceives* its role in the work it does by assisting Jews and defending Israel.

I have borrowed perspectives on some observations the anthropologist Susan Harding made regarding American born again Christians' engagements in politics. She noticed televangelists and other born again Christians in the United States produced the New Christian right in the 1980s by encouraging people to "act out the history". The dispensationalist movement changed from being separatist and withdrawn from the public sphere. They now suddenly called for political activism and action. These born again Christians had observed a sequence of events, which was believed to happen after the Rapture, was in fact already happening, such as Israel's capture of Jerusalem in the six-day war in 1967 (Harding 1994, 66). Born again Christians now started to believe "God has more in store" for Christians than hitherto had been gathered; "Christians may be more directly implicated in Bible prophecies than had been previously supposed, and Christians figure, ever so slightly perhaps, in events that bring Christ back to staunch the dreadful downhill slide of history", writes Harding (1994, 66). Thus, these born again Christians constructed a narrative where they believed God would destroy America unless the Christians responded to God, by becoming more assertive in public defence of morality and decency (Harding 1994, 68). Harding also argues the rhetorical language to dispensational thinking *is* political per se. The reading of current events is not just "religious correct interpretations, dispensationalist reading *are* those current events" (Harding 1994, 60). In other words, the dispensationalism becomes a way of *knowing history*, according to Harding (1994, 60). Inspired by Harding, I will use

this understanding of dispensationalism as a way of *knowing history*, and in that way of knowing history, the ICEJ has constructed a narrative where it participates in God's providential plan and writes itself into world history.

I will also use some thoughts on the problem of evil, because it becomes a central aspect in the ICEJ's conception of the world. In movements that hold a dualistic worldview, where the world is divided in good and evil, theodicy provides meaning for why evil things occur (McGuire 2002, 43-44). This dualistic tension between good and evil is present in the ICEJ's narrative, and it can help us to understand how the ICEJ explains why bad things are happening to Israel, while at the same time, God is in absolute control of the world.

While this thesis will primarily use these theoretical perspectives, I will throughout the thesis also present some other thoughts and ideas from other theories from sociology and anthropology in order to further highlight the ICEJ's work on specific issues.

1.5 Empirical foundation

As I mentioned above, Christian Zionist organizations support Israel in a variety of ways. In order to cover the ICEJ's activities and strategies I have used a pluralistic set of source material. My primary source is the ICEJ's websites and monthly magazine "Word From Jerusalem" where the organization is publishing news updates of activities, theological and political positional statements on the situation in Israel. Because the ICEJ operates both within local branches and from its headquarter in Jerusalem, I had to look at the ICEJ on a global scale. However, the geographical focus of obtaining material has predominately, but not exclusively been from the ICEJ's headquarter in Israel, the United States and Norway. The lack of access to all local branches, due to language barriers, may therefore reduce the whole picture of the ICEJ's work. Moreover, the ICEJ has published a large amount of articles and update on its website, and go through it all would be beyond time and scope of this thesis. I therefore looked at the key issues that the ICEJ is interested in, published at its websites.

The ICEJ's websites give an overview of all activities and provide enough insight to analyse the goals and strategies used to support Israel. In regard of the ICEJ's goal, in which builds on a theological foundation, I have used a pamphlet series written by rev. Malcolm Hedding, the previous ICEJ Director and now an ICEJ spokesperson. The pamphlets contain theological and educational teachings on biblical Zionism, in addition to the ICEJ's webpage on Christian Zionism <http://int.icej.org/media/christian-zionism-101>.

Regarding the ICEJ strategies for supporting Israel, I looked at articles published by the ICEJ regarding its “Aliyah”-work at the <http://int.icej.org/aid/icej-aid> and at articles published regarding Aliyah in Word From Jerusalem (WFJ) from 2004-2014, which are available in electronic editions from the website. On the “Campaign” page <http://int.icej.org/campaigns>, the ICEJ is publishing its positions and arguments regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, more specifically on the issues such as the international community’s equation of racism and Zionism, allegations of Israel being an apartheid state and the two state solution. The argumentation is interesting because it is used in the public sphere where the ICEJ is advocating the Israeli cause. I wanted to make my thesis as up-to-date as possible; therefore, I have used cases from 2000 until today. However, I have no time limit for the material used in this thesis.

I have also used interviews that I made with official spokespersons from the ICEJ’s staff, whom I had meetings with when I did research/fieldwork in Israel in the period of 11 September to 14 October 2013. I made the interviews before I had a clear view of my aim of inquiry for this thesis; therefore, my questions covered a broad scope of the ICEJ’s activities. However, I covered some of the issues that finally became the theme for my thesis. Thus, I have used these interviews where they have suited, to illuminate certain aspects of the topics I analyse. My interviewees were PR-Director David Parsons and Aliyah-Director Howard Flower. I have also used a lecture by Howard Flower at the Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem 2013, which I attended. Because I wanted to achieve a broader scope of the ICEJ’s work of assisting Jews to Israel, I made an interview with the ICEJ’s closest collaboration partner, the Jewish Agency, where I spoke with representative Jack Corcos.

My material is thus primarily based on the ICEJ’s own version of how it operates. However, much of the ICEJ’s work is directly involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, there are some ethical dilemmas regarding its work that have been raised from the international community. I have used “The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism” – a declaration signed by heads of four local churches in Jerusalem – to discuss some of the consequences and problematic issues that rise with the ICEJ work in preserving Israel as a Jewish state. In addition, I have used newspaper articles and secondary literature in order to get a broader scope of the debates the ICEJ becomes involved in, by its work.

All Bible quotations has been made from *New King James Version*, which is the Bible most evangelicals, included the ICEJ use, because it is seen to preserve the Word of God with more direct translations of the Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic texts (NKJV 2010).

1.6 Methods

In order to answer my aim of inquiry about the ICEJ's objectives, strategies and effects, I used category based qualitative analysis as explained in Tove Thagaard's book *Systematik og innlevelse*, on the interviews, speeches, documents and articles (2003, 150-1). This method was chosen because I sought to examine the organization's argumentation and therefore interview analysis became most suitable. I also used hermeneutical approach in order to understand the context in which the ICEJ's narrative makes sense (Czarniawska 1998, 4, Thagaard 2003, 39)

I recorded the interviews and lecture from my trip to Israel, which I later transcribed in order to analyse them.⁴ I have included a few personal opinions by these representatives because I found these opinions to provide a better understanding of the ICEJ's motivations for its work.⁵ My focus in this thesis has been to identify the arguments that the ICEJ uses to describe its duty to assist Jewish migration and advocacy of Israel, and how these arguments have resulted in its executive action of doing these things. For each of the two issues, assisted migration and defence of Israel, I have read the published material by coding the most central themes in order to examine the ICEJ's strategies that are used to arrange for Jewish homecoming. When I have read the ICEJ's articles, I have categorized how the ICEJ understands its work as a part of the knowing history, as explained in Harding's theory. I have here coded the parts of how the ICEJ uses the Bible to find legitimacy in its work and its motivations for doing this.

I have done the same type of coding with most of the same key words when I analysed the ICEJ's advocacy work for Israel in the public sphere. I have here identified which arguments the ICEJ has used to identify the main concerns the ICEJ had for Israel, in the meeting with the public sphere and how this fits into its narrative. I have not directly looked for how the ICEJ has translated its biblical arguments in its support for Israel⁶, but I have rather coded the primary issues the ICEJ is concerned about, regarding the de-legitimization of Israel, and how it argued in response by using secular arguments in order to respond to this de-legitimization. I have excluded analysing articles without significance to my problem of inquiry. The ICEJ runs a wide set of activities, and this thesis only covers a small part of the scope of these activities.

⁴ Because my interviews were made with official spokespersons from the ICEJ and the Jewish agency, I have not anonymized them, because I wanted information about the official version of the ICEJ as an organization and not particularly personal opinion by its members.

⁵ Because these statements were uttered by official spokespersons, and they consented to be interviewed with the knowledge that the information would be used in a MA thesis, I decided that it was justifiable to use these statements.

⁶ Hanne Trangerud showed in her thesis how evangelical law firms translates their religious arguments in court trail in order to seek resonance in a secular sphere. She here used theories from Jürgen Habermas that suggest that a neutral language is necessary for all parts in the public sphere (Trangerud 2014). We can see that the ICEJ uses the same tactic of adopting a non-religious neutral language in the meeting with the public sphere.

1.7 Content

The first two chapters primarily addresses how Christian Zionists became politically engaged in Jewish homecoming and the restoration of Israel. In *chapter 2*, I present how Christian Zionism has gradually evolved from clerics who found new ways of reading the Bible after the Reformation. This resulted in a doctrine where the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Israel was seen as a precondition for the Second Coming of Christ. From restoration thoughts in evangelical circles in Britain, the conception spread to America and became a global movement with high political influence. The scope of chapter 2 will therefore explore how and why.

In *chapter 3*, I will further explore Christian Zionist organizations by focusing on the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. In the presentation of the ICEJ, I will present the scope of the organization, the historical context in which it was established and how it began as a protest against the international community to now be an ‘embassy’ for Christians around the world who supports Israel. Here I will further elaborate on how the ICEJ works, its objectives, activities and the reception it has in Israel. The ideological goals of the ICEJ are explored in *chapter 4*, and I look at the theological understanding that motivates the ICEJ to achieve its goals. In *chapter 5*, I analyse the strategies employed by the ICEJ in order to achieve its goals, as explained in chapter 4. Chapter 5 therefore focuses on how the ICEJ assists in Jewish immigration to Israel, how it finds the Jews in the Diaspora, who the ICEJ collaborates with and how this action is a part of fulfilling biblical promises. *Chapter 6*, explores how the ICEJ advocates in favour of Israel in the public sphere, particularly emphasising on the arguments it uses to fight the de-legitimization of Israel. I will also see how it tries to influence the international policy makers to ensure Israel’s continued possession of disputed land territories and as a Jewish state. *Chapter 7*, looks at ethical consequences of the ICEJ’s work in the light of some critical voices, where I have used the Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism as an onset for discussing these my main findings ethical consequences raised by critics. In *chapter 8*, I will sum up my findings and conclude my aim of inquiry and my research questions of the ICEJ’s goals, strategies and effects.

2 Historical development of Christian Zionism

“You study Christian Zionism? You know what we call them? WASPs⁷, because they sting. We don’t like them”.

Christian Palestinian worker at the
Swedish Theological Institute Jerusalem⁸.

*“I don’t care about their theology,
they are here to help us and are our friends”.*

Jewish woman in Jerusalem,
friend with one of the ICEJ’s staff⁹

Hated by many, loved by a few: The Christian Zionists have a troubled reputation for their belief. The hardest critics of Christian Zionists accuse them for being anti-Semites who looks forward to the Tribulation¹⁰ when Jews will be scarified and only a few converted Jews will survive (Schulson 2014). Conspirators accuse Christian Zionists of being part of the Illuminati¹¹ and claiming they are in league with a Satanist version of Judaism (Marrs n.d.). Others claim they are lobbying against any solutions to peace in the Middle East, and are supporting Israel unconditionally in any action against a Palestinian state (Stephen Sizer 2006). The sociologist José Casanova claimed the dispensational doctrine was populist and anti-intellectualist (Casanova 1994, 141). Most Zionist Jews, on the contrary, happily receive financial aid and support from their Christian friends in a mutual political goal to restore Eretz Israel.

Millions of people around the world call themselves Christian Zionists, and they pray to God every day for Jews to make their return to Israel and for the protection of God’s nation. Today, Christian Zionism is closely associated with or almost synonymous to evangelicalism in the United States. However, Christian Zionism is neither of American origin nor embraced by all evangelicals. This chapter will explore the theological roots and development of Christian Zionism within the evangelical movement, and show how it has evolved from millennial restoration thoughts to becoming a highly influential force both in American politics and as a global movement. The chapter ends with some of the key points of criticism the Christian Zionist movement has received for its influence and meddling in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

⁷ This is a disparaging term referring to White Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

⁸ Bethlehem resident Christian Palestinian and employee at the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem, where I spent my first weeks in Jerusalem.

⁹ A Jewish woman who lives in Jerusalem. I met her by coincidence through a mutual acquaintance.

¹⁰ The period before the second coming of Christ.

¹¹ In modern conspiracy theory, Illuminati refers, to a secret society that controls world events (Barkun 2003).

2.1 From millennial thoughts to politics: The restoration of Israel

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when Christians first started to have eschatological thoughts of a Jewish restoration of their ancient homeland as a precondition for the Second Coming of Christ. However, the literalistic reading of the Bible that emerged in the wake of the Reformation was a key factor. Before the Reformation, amillennialism had been the dominating trend within the Church¹². The Reformation criticised both the Church's authority and the traditional allegorical reading of the Bible – now, the Bible became the authority alone, *Sola Scriptura* ('by scripture alone') (Goldman 2009, 8).¹³ With a literalist reading of the Old Testament in a new manner, messianic Christians expected the Jewish people would play a central role in the eschatology (Sharif 1976, 125, Ariel 2006, 75).

By the end of the sixteenth century, theologians had begun to calculate when the apocalypse would happen, identified the Roman Catholic Papacy as the antichrist and concluded the Jews would convert to Christianity and return to their ancient homeland (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 3). Other theologians of that time claimed to have found the ten lost tribes of Israel. A return of the lost tribes to Israel were seen by these Christians as Messianic signs.¹⁴

The thoughts of a Jewish restoration to Israel were further developed in the seventeenth century, when the English Revolution "stirred the messianic imagination and gave rise to premillennial groups that took interest in the Jewish people and the prospect of their return to Palestine", according to Yaakov Ariel (2006, 75). Among the seventeenth and eighteenth century's premillennial thinkers, puritans from Britain and the Netherlands were most engaged in restoring the Jewish people to the Holy Land. These puritans believed a restoration of the Jews would not only be a solution to the "Jewish problem" in Europe, but they a restoration would also result in the imminent return of Christ. In their devotion not this notion, the puritans encouraged the heads of state in France, England and Holland to participate in their plans, but without any significant luck (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 3-5).

¹² In an amillennial belief, Christ is ruling through the Church, while the return of Christ is expected to happen in a remote future. The Church has thus a mission to ensure its followers' salvation. The messianic overtones in the Bible were seen as allegorical. However, this does not mean there were not any millennial groups before the Reformation. There was a number of groups millennial groups throughout the Middle Ages which expected the imminent return of Jesus to Earth (Ariel 2006, 74-5)

¹³ Professor of Religious Studies, Shalom Goldman, also notes the new reading of the Bible lead to an interest for Christian scholars in the Hebrew language. This Christian Hebraism among intellectuals was particularly prominent in England, but spread with the English colonies to America, where it sat root in American colleges before the American Revolution (Goldman 2009, 9).

¹⁴ For example, Queen Elizabeth I's ambassador, Gils Fletcher, was one of them who argued the Kings of the Orient were descendants of the lost tribes, and predicted they, with the following remnants of the scattered tribes, would return and establish a commonwealth in Israel (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 3, see also chapter 5).

In the emergence of the nineteenth century, the enlightenment's scepticism challenged the Church's ontology, while clerics continued their fascination of the fact that the Jewish people had survived as a separate group throughout history in the Diaspora. In 1795, a divinity college student at Cambridge, Charles Jerram, wrote an essay where he claimed that the Jews had an absolute and unlimited right to an everlasting possession of the land of Canaan and that this claim would always be reasonable and just. Contradicting earlier prophetic interpreters, Jarram argued that the Jews would be converted to Christianity *after* they had been restored in their ancient homeland (a concept that would be important for later Christian Zionists) (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 6, Lewis 2010, 44).

Interestingly, the nineteenth-century 'rationalism' had to surrender to an evangelical revival in Britain, where thought of a Jewish restoration to Palestine dominated Victorian piety. Before moving on to explore the impact the premillennialists had on the Zionist movement in the mid-nineteenth century, it is worth noting that also prominent public officials began to take interest in the Holy Land. Lord Shaftsbury was among those who advocated for a Jewish restoration to Palestine within the British imperial politics throughout the century.¹⁵ The British Prime Minister, Lord Palmerstone, supported Lord Shaftsbury's restoration plans, however not of biblical reasons. His motivations were solely out of British imperial interests, where Jews in the Levant could be a useful tool to protect England's future interests. This would later led to the Balfour-declaration in 1917, which was a key step towards the establishment of Israel in 1948.

2.1.1 Influence on Jewish Zionism

Parallel to the Christian eagerness of Jewish restoration in Palestine, the secular Jews shared the ambitions for creating a Jewish nationhood where they could be protected from persecutions. According to Shalom Goldman, the Jewish Zionist narrative has excluded the influence from Christian Zionists, because it was explicit in the Zionist self-understanding that it was Christian anti-Semitism that caused the need for a Jewish state (Goldman 2009, 1). Therefore, the influence from Christian Zionism seems to have been underestimated in in history of Jewish Zionism.¹⁶

¹⁵ The political interest for restoring the Jews to Palestine has been seen in relations with British self-interests in the Near East when the Ottoman Empire controlled the Levant (See e.g. Sharif 1976, 129).

¹⁶ The majority of the Jews showed little concern for eschatological thoughts, although some believed a Jewish nation in Palestine could hasten the coming of the Messiah, and small Jewish communities even began building settlements in Palestine in the mid-nineteenth century. Most orthodox rabies also believed it was against God to make a large political intervention in Palestine – only God could establish a Jewish state, still small groups or individual settlers were for the most part accepted to live in the ancient Jewish homeland by the rabies (Goldman 2009, 10).

Even though most Jews did not share the messianic thoughts of the evangelical Christians, they still embraced the Christian aid. One of the most important Christian persons, who influenced Jewish Zionism, was the British clergyman William H. Hechler, who became close to Theodore Herzl at the end of the nineteenth century (Merkley 1998, 9-10). According to Paul Charles Merkley, without the help of Hechler, there would never have been a World Zionist Organization, Balfour Declaration, a British Mandate or a Israeli state (1998, 8).¹⁷

Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress in Basel Switzerland in 1897. Just a handful of Christians were present, among them was the Swiss Calvinist, Henri Dunant, famous as the founder of the Red Cross, who was concerned for the Jews' situation in Europe. It is claimed that the label *Christian Zionist* was first used by Herzl to describe Dunant, at the Congress (Widnes 2007, 23, Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 95-6). Thus, this may be when Christian Zionism appeared as a named phenomenon.

2.2 Dispensational premillennialism

In order to understand how Christian Zionism became strongly associated with dispensationalism, it is necessary to explore the theological development in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1826, the Scottish clergyman Edward Irving added a 203-page preface to a translation he made of the book *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majesty* by the Spanish Jesuit Manuel Lacunza. Lacunza viewed the apocalyptic events in the Book of Revelation as imminent. In the preface, Irving, presented his own speculations about the coming end, where he predicted apostasy of the Church, restoration of the Jews to Israel and the imminent return of Christ after the restoration (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 13).

Irving's premillennial thoughts inspired John Nelson Darby, an Irish Church renegade priest, who developed the doctrine of *dispensationalism* to the premillennialist movement. In Darby's view, God deals with humanity in different epochs throughout history. However, humankind fails to find acceptance with God in each of these dispensations, which thus leads to the next one (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 14). According to Darby, dispensationalism became a way of dividing world history, and he claimed that there would be six different interactions from God: Dispensation of Conscience (Adam to Noah); ... of Government (Noah to Abraham); ... of Patriarchal Rule (Abraham to Moses); ... of Mosaic Law (Moses to Christ); ... of Grace (the Church Age) and ... of the Millennial Kingdom (with the return of Christ).

¹⁷ Hechler had connections to the Protestant Christian rulers and through him, Herzl was introduced to the German emperor, who became a patron for the Zionist cause (Ariel 2006)

Humankind are currently in the dispensation of “Grace” where God will judge on peoples’ personal relationship with Jesus Christ (Weber 2004, 20). However, according to Darby, the Church has also failed this dispensation, and Israel will in the future replace the Church, in which God will proceed with His plans, writes Weber (2004, 23).

Darby believed that God had given the Jews the land of Israel to possess for all eternity, and before the Second Coming, God will empty the land of all its inhabitants and give it back the Jews. After the return of the Jews, the Antichrist would rise and rule the earth for seven years with Jews by his side. Christ would then appear, defeat the Antichrist and establish the Millennial Kingdom on Earth, where a remnant of the Jews would be delivered. Christian believers would, prior to the raise of the Antichrist, be raptured up from earth where they would “meet Christ in the sky” this is known as the ‘Rapture of the saints’ (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 13-16).

In Irving’s and Darby’s dispensational doctrine, God is in absolute control of the course of history that will lead to the restoration of the Jews to Israel and towards the ultimate fulfilment of biblical prophesies. This doctrine made an immense influence on later Christian writers, especially after Darby journeyed to America in 1862, where his dispensational thoughts were well received (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 16-7).

2.2.1 Reception in America

It was in America¹⁸ that dispensational thoughts would receive most adherence and become the most influential movement within Protestant Fundamentalism. Premillennialism was not common in America prior to Darby’s journeys there. This does not mean that Americans did not use the Bibles prophesies to make sense of the world (Weber 2004, 11). Many Americans believed the New World had prophetic significance. For example, prominent theologians such as the puritan Johnathan Edwards, viewed the First Great Awakening¹⁹ as a first step towards Christianization of the world and a postmillennial Second Coming. Not everyone shared such a positive completion of the End, according to Weber. During the American Revolution, many Christians believed King George of England to be the Antichrist while the patriotic rebels in the colonies were seen as the “woman in the Wilderness” in the Book of Revelation. The American

¹⁸ The American evangelical revival phases had an enormous impact in the shaping of Protestant fundamentalism as seen today. This might seem as a paradox, however, José Casanova argues the disestablishments of church and state in America (which he argues have happened three times), actually have made Protestant Evangelicalism (Christian fundamentalism) to become the “civil religion, that is, as the public religion of America” (Casanova 1994, 136).

¹⁹ The Great Awakening was a series of religious revivals, which took place between the mid-17th century and late 20th century. It was through the Great Awakenings when Evangelicalism transformed to the movement in America in today (Spector 2009, 36).

Revolution, in addition to the French Revolution, were seen as apocalyptic signs and many feared the revolutions would culminate in the destruction of the whole world (Weber 2004, 11).

Dispensational premillennialism emerged in the years following the Civil War (1861-65), in the wake of Darby's five missionary journeys to America from 1864-1865 (Weber 2004, 11-13). In America Darby received a number for disciples, where the most prominent were D. L. Moody, Jams Brookes and C. I. Scofield, who established bible institutes and lobbied for the new doctrine (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 98-100). Scofield popularized Darby's dispensationalist views and believed "[e]ach of the dispensations may be regarded as a new test of the natural man, and each ends in judgment – making his utter failure in every dispensation" (quoted in Weber 2004, 20). In 1909, he published the *Scofield Reference Bible*, which became one of the most important tools to spread dispensational premillennialism. With the Scofield Bible, new light was shed on the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, which had commonly been regarded as cryptic and inaccessible. According to Chon-Sherbok, the Scofield Bible made such a great impact that, "it became the single document of all [Protestant] fundamentalism" (2006, 101-104).

William E. Blackstone was also a prominent disciple of Darby in the second half of the nineteenth century, and became essential to later Christian Zionist mentality. Blackstone asserted that God, as a part of His greater providential plan for humanity, had given America a special mission to restore the Jews to Palestine (Ariel 2006, 77). In Blackstone's writings, for example in the *Jesus is coming*, which was translated into 42 languages and became a bestseller, he stressed the need to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. On his journeys around Europe he spread the words of the immanent Rapture of believers and went to visit pioneer Jewish colonists in Palestine to tell the Jews of their important role to fulfil Bible prophesies (Weber 2004, 103). When he returned to America, Blackstone lobbied the American presidents where he promoted the idea of giving Palestine to the Jews. According to Ariel, the lobbying done by Blackstone and other Zionists leaders made a direct influence on President Woodrow Wilson's decision to allow Britain issue the Balfour Declaration in 1917. This is however little known because Wilson did not desire public attention for his negotiations with the Zionist movement, conversations thus happened behind closed doors (Ariel 2006, 79).

The Spread of Dispensational thoughts

In the early twentieth century, dispensationalism was absorbed into large parts of the Evangelical society in America and became a part of the larger movement of Protestant

fundamentalists.²⁰ Protestants had started mobilizing against what they regarded as a disintegration of religion in public society. It was the new theories from Europe where Higher Criticism of the Bible (source criticism) and the Darwinian Evolution theory that challenged the traditional worldview, which became the conservative Protestants primary concern. The new, modern theories demanded reading of the Bible through the light of history, and not “history through the lens of the Scripture”, thus when the Scripture was challenged by higher criticism, its “infallibility” turned into a Fundamentalist dogma (Casanova 1994, 14-1).²¹

José Casanova writes that Protestant evangelicalism was naive in its illusion that it could just reject the well-established Church traditions with all its “intermediate corruptions and cofounding scholastic interpretations” to just faithfully return to the original church. Hence, Casanova refer to the “primitive” evangelical movement as both “populist” and “anti-intellectualist” (1994, 141). Casanova calls the dispensational premillennial dominance a paradox for Protestant Fundamentalists, because this was

neither an orthodox traditionalist nor the commonsensical, literal reading of the Bible, but a relatively new, esoteric, yet popular school of interpretation which understood Scripture as a text full of hidden meanings and of scientific and historical facts, (past, present and future), whose revelation was open to ordinary people initiated in “millennial arithmetic (Casanova 1994).

The dispensational premillennial way of reading the Bible was in fact a *new* and unorthodox but became the dominating branch of Protestant fundamentalism in America in the end of the twentieth century.

Pentecostal movements also absorbed piecemeal of dispensationalist ideas and combined them with supernatural elements, such as speaking in tongues, in the early twentieth century (Harding 1994, 66).²² The fact that the Pentecostal movement absorbed the dispensational doctrine can thus contribute to explain why Christian Zionism has become such a popular phenomenon in a global scale. With its “direct spiritual revelations” and strong appeal for the poorest in the society, Pentecostalism has been an attractive option for people (Jenkins 2002, 63).

²⁰ Dispensationalism became popular among the Evangelicals, but not all, see the 1.2 for further distinction.

²¹ The word ‘fundamentalism’ has its origin in the period between 1910 and 1915 when American and British theologians started publishing a pamphlet called the Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth, which was a grassroots response to the liberal Protestantism’s new ways of reading the Bible (Spector 2009, 37-8). Casanova calls Protestant fundamentalism a “modern anti-modernist reaction” against the disestablishment between church and state, which had taken place since the Civil War (Casanova 1994, 140).

²² After 1906, there was an “outbreak” of supernatural gifts - the return of Christ was in route, according to contemporary dispensationalists (Harding 1994, 66).

2.3 The establishment of Israel: A divine sign of the coming end

The Christian restoration plans was maintained in Britain, and in 1917 the British government issued the Balfour Declaration, which supported a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The motives of this declaration is unclear. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, claimed his motives were to encourage Jewish American financiers to lobby American politicians to engage in the First World War. However, historians have later claimed there might have been more strategic motivations for holding Palestine as a promise to the Jews. There are also indications that David Lloyd George and Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour both had their personal biblical motivations for the Jewish restoration to Palestine (Spector 2009, 19-20).

Regardless of the motivations, the Balfour Declaration provided Great Britain with the Palestinian territories in 1922 at the Paris Peace Conference in the aftermath of the First World War. The inter-war period was also characterized by Jewish immigration to Palestine in the third and fourth Aliyah and by several Arab uprisings. However, the Western Powers showed little political activity in the period, but the Christian Zionists in America followed the development in Palestine with eagerness, and read about all new Jewish settlements and developments in an eschatological light (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 111-115). The Christian Zionists expressed, however, some dismay when Britain gave restriction orders to limit the Jewish immigration due to the Arab revolts in 1936-1939 (Ariel 2006, 79). In the inter-world war period, the political activism of the Christian Zionists in America almost faded to nothing after the Scopes Monkey Trail in 1925²³. In Britain the restoration enthusiasm was but a shadow of what it had once been, while the rise of the Nazis suppressed pro-Zionist activity on large parts of the European mainland (Ariel 2006, 80).

The Second World War, with the extermination of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust, prompted the establishment of Israel in 1948. Palestine became the only hope for over 100,000 Jewish survivors who lived in holding camps in Europe, and were yearning for starting a new life in Palestine. (Clark 2007, 141). On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted the Partition Plan (see Attachment Figure 2).²⁴ With the establishment of

²³ The Butler Act Law in Tennessee prohibited teaching of evolution theory in public schools, the schoolteacher John T. Scopes was found guilty for illegal teaching of evolution theory by law. The case received national attention, because of (or despite the fact) that the fundamentalists saw it as a victory, they withdrew from the public scene (Brekke 2012, 218).

²⁴ The resolution stated the independent Jewish and Arab states, and the termination of the British Mandate as soon as possible (1947). The Zionists accepted the terms, while the Palestinians, with the support of their neighbouring countries, rejected the resolution. The day before the ending of the British Mandate, David Ben-Gurion declared Israel as an independent nation, and the United States recognized Israel the day after (Clark 2007, 143).

Israel, the Christian Zionists in America regained interest in the restoration of the Jews in the Holy Land though remained political passive, while the engagement in Britain remained negligible (Clark 2007, 145).

In 1967, the Six-Day War broke out that resulted in victory for Israel and the beginning of the occupation of Gaza, the Golan Height, the West Bank and East-Jerusalem (Lutes 2013, 369). The overwhelming Israeli victory made a huge impact on Christian Zionism and lead to new interest for the Israeli cause. Many Christians believed God to have been on Israel's side; this was the only explanation of how Israel could have crushed Egypt, Jordan and Syria like David had crushed Goliath in the Bible. In addition, Israel's capture of important historic sites in East-Jerusalem further strengthened this view (Ariel 2006, 81). Israeli officials welcomed the Christian Zionists friendship, and in 1971, David Ben-Gurion addressed 1,400 Christians at the Jerusalem Conference on Bible Prophecy where he declared Israel as the Land of the Bible. The conference generated massive tourism by Evangelical pilgrims, which till this day is crucial for Israeli economy (Spector 2009, 146).

2.4 Revival of Christian Zionism in America

From the late 1970s, Protestant fundamentalist began their remobilization and re-entered the political sphere. Their impact on the public and in the politics has, according to Casanova, been "blown out of proportion" by academics and journalists (1994, 145). Still, the impact of the New Christian Right movement (NRC)²⁵ drew the public's attention to Israel.

After the Scope Monkey Trail in 1925, liberal Protestantism dominated in the public sphere; however, the fundamentalist sects were not gone. Whereas some Christian fundamentalists regarded the modern world as beyond redemption and withdrew from social engagement, others resumed the struggle of regaining religious authority in the public society (Casanova 1994, 146). In the late 1970s, the 'New Fundamentalists' managed to unite Conservative Protestants and dispensationalists towards common goals. In their strive, new equipment was used in order to reach out to the masses (Hunt 2003, 65). Televangelists, such as Jerry Falwell, Billy Graham and Pat Robertson reached millions of Christians in their broadcasts with their apocalyptic language, and dispensationalism truly became a hot topic in American

²⁵ The NCR refers to the movement of Christian political engagement that emerged in the 1980s in America.

popular culture. For example, Hal Lindsey's bestselling book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, where he compared biblical End-Time prophesies with then-contemporary events.²⁶

Prior to 1980, dispensationalists believed it was up to God when the Rapture would occur, but they found *signs* in the time that proved the end was near and prophesies were about to be fulfilled. However, when events, that were believed to occur after the Rapture of the church²⁷, suddenly occurred, such as the unification of Jerusalem in 1967, the dispensational narrative's absolute futurism was modified and Christians received an active role in God's providential plans, according to Harding (1994, 66). In his book, *The 1980: Countdown to Armageddon*, Lindsey portrayed the American nation as marginalized and if the Christians did not act now, then America would face a grim destiny. Other prominent evangelicals, such as Tim LaHaye, argued if liberal humanists gained full control over the government, then America would surly face the Tribulation. Fortunately this was not predestined, according to LaHaye; if the Christians took a more active role in preserving the country, then it was possible America would remain a world power (Harding 1994, 68-9). From now on, the Christian Zionists took a more active role in shaping American foreign policy to Israel.

Rev. Jerry Falwell and Billy Graham are two examples of televangelists who have influenced the American political elite in issues concerning Israel. These Christian Zionists have close ties to Israeli prime ministers and they have used their position to oppose outcomes of the peace negotiations that would weaken Israel's position.²⁸ However, the Israeli government did not always act to the Christian Zionists' desire: Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert, although political conservative, championed for withdrawal of settlements in Palestinian territories, these acts were condemned by the Christian Zionists (Spector 2009, 148).

In the mid-1990s, LaHaye published the first book of the *Left Behind*²⁹ saga, which became a best-selling novel about the apocalyptic End Times.³⁰ Robertson, LaHaye and Lindsey with other Christian Zionistic leaders, still reach some 100 million Americans weekly

²⁶ The book became a bestselling novel after the release in 1970 and was the biggest-selling non-fiction in the 1970s, regardless of theme or field, and sold seven and a half million copies (Merkley 2002, 41).

²⁷ In this pre-Tribulational Rapture there is a clear separation between fulfilled and unfulfilled Bible prophesies. As long as Christians are on the earth, Bible prophesies remain unfulfilled. This is the futuristic and orthodox version of dispensational doctrine (Harding 1994, 62)

²⁸ One example of this was Falwell who "threatened" with mobilizing 200,000 pastors to oppose any US demands when Bill Clinton pushed Netanyahu to fulfil the terms of withdrawing the illegal Jewish settlements in the Oslo Accord (Spector 2009, 147-8).

²⁹ The *Left Behind* saga were co-written with Jarry B. Jenkins

³⁰ In the NCR, LaHaye was a prominent evangelical who had encouraged Falwell to establish the Moral Majority and he founded the Christian conservative lobby group, Council for National Policy³⁰. The organization became "an elite club of leading Christian conservatives interested in shaping America's domestic and foreign policy" (Clark 2007, 197). According to Clark, most of the leading Christian Zionists in America are associated with the Council for National Policy (2007, 198).

through books, radio and television programs, according to Cohn-Sherbok (2006, 164). Their use of mass media, where they encourage supporting Israel, has sustained the premillennial dispensationalist legacy of Darby.

Christian Zionism has indeed developed into a major force within the political and public society. This has resulted in the establishment of some 250 pro-Israeli evangelical organizations in America today (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 164). Christian Zionist leaders and the pro-Israeli lobby have maintained an important influence on the government and have contributed in shaping the US foreign policy. In 1991, the Christian Israel Public Affairs Committee (CIPAC) was launched³¹, which since then has lobbied on behalf of the Israeli Likud Party. The United Coalition for Israel (UCFI) brought Christians and Jews together in their common goal of restoring Israel's reputation in the public sphere, which also includes the largest Christian Zionist organizations: the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, Bridges for Peace and Christians for Peace (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 182).

As a part of their active work, these organizations lobby the American media and political establishment, and have also supported Israel by arranging solidarity and pilgrim tours and to the Holy Land. According to the Israeli Minister of Tourism, evangelical tourism to Israel is million-dollar industry with approximately 400,000 visitors a year.³² One of the aims of these solidarity visits is to show support to the Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories. Christian Zionists have also encouraged Jews to colonize the West Bank. For example, organizations such as Christian Friends of Israeli Communities (CFOIC) have a program called 'adopt a settlement' where it encourage evangelical churches to provide financial support to the Jewish settlers (Clark 2007, 210, Sizer 2004a, 270-1).

2.5 Criticism of Christian Zionism

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Christian Zionism has a troubled reputation. The hardest criticism has come from other Christians who claims Christian Zionists are lobbying their own interest. Spector points at four major critics of Christian Zionism: (1) Christian Zionists support Jewish Aliyah to Israel because they hope this will speed up the time for the Tribulation and the millennial age; (2) their true motives are to evangelise the Jews; (3) they have misunderstood the covenant and the true meaning of the Bible, which is to stand up for the

³¹ CIPAC was modeled after the American Israel Public Affairs Committee AIPAC, an Israeli lobby organization in the US.

³² Numbers from the Israeli MFA 2013. There were a total of 3,54 million tourists where about 60 percent were Christian tourists, of these 20 % were Protestant Christians – most evangelicals (2014)

oppressed (Palestinians) and show justice; and (4) they are allied with extreme right-wing Israeli politicians, which is a major obstacle for peace (2009, 111).

In 2004, the Palestinian Christian Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center held a conference for opponents of Christian Zionists. They made a press release where they rejected the “heretical teachings of Christian Zionism that facilitates and support [Israel and US] extremist politics as they advance a form of racial exclusivity and perpetual war rather than the gospel of universal love, redemption and reconciliation taught by Jesus Christ” (quoted in Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 195). These critics were restated in the Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism (see chapter 7). Christian Zionism has been the subject of massive critics for their unconditional support of Israeli politics and for spoiling any peace process between Israel and Palestine. Rammy M. Haija claimed through the influence of the Christian Zionist lobbies, the Israeli objectives of conquering the Occupied Territories of Palestine would be achieved (Haija 2006, 93).

The populist and anti-intellectual doctrine dispensationalism, as Casanova referred to it, has therefore not been well received within many Christian circles as seen here. However, Christian Zionism became nevertheless popular and global, reaching far and wide within the political sphere and within the public society. This chapter has elaborated the raise of Christian Zionism from its beginning as thoughts of a Jewish restoration to the Promised Land in the sixteenth century, after the Reformation demanded new reading of the Bible. It then developed into becoming a dispensational doctrine that became popular within the evangelical movement. The next chapters will concentrate on the narrative of one specific Christian Zionistic organization – the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, which – according to Sizer is one of the most controversial of all organizations in Israel (Sizer 2004b)

3 The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem

“God attached them to this city before Christianity and Islam arose and if our countries would not represent us here, we must represent ourselves”.

ICEJ PR-Director David Parsons on why the ICEJ was established.

Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, greeted the establishment of the ICEJ in the autumn of 1980 by saying “Your decision, to found the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem – at a time, when we were left alone by others because of our faith – was a bold act and a symbol of your closeness to us. Your gestures and acting gave us the feeling that we are not alone” (ICEJ 2013a).

Today the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is a global non-governmental organization (NGO) with branches all over the world. The organization has marked itself in the Israeli society as a social aid organization, as a political organization and as an ‘embassy’ for Christians around the world who supports Israel. Every year the ICEJ draws thousands of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem on their annual Feast of the Tabernacles where they in solidarity with the Jews in Israel, celebrate the autumn holiday Sukkot. As a result of the ICEJ’s massive work and contributions to the Israeli society, it has become an influential actor within the Christian Zionist movement, which makes it interesting to study this organization.

This chapter will contain a presentation of the ICEJ, where I will begin with the political context in which it was established, before moving on to the ICEJ’s objectives in its support of Israel. I will then present a scope of the ICEJ’s activities and work. Then I will present central persons of the ICEJ’s staff, its economy and members. Although the theology of the ICEJ is a matter for the next chapter, I will briefly give an overview over its rooting within charismatic evangelicalism and in dispensationalism, in this chapter. The chapter will end with how the ICEJ is received by the Israeli society today.

3.1 The founding of the ICEJ

Although East Jerusalem has been under Israeli occupation since the Six- Day War in 1967, it was first in 1980, when Israel declared “Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel” in the Basic Law, East Jerusalem officially became a part of Israel’s capital city (Knesset 1980). The Israeli declaration arouse reactions from the international community, and the UN Security Council declared the Law to be illegal in Resolution 478 and further

called for the international community to end diplomatic relations in Jerusalem (UN 1980). Embassies from thirteen nations took the UN's advice and moved their embassies to Tel Aviv. The ICEJ claims the international community yielded for pressure by an Arab oil embargo (ICEJ 2013b, 85). As a counter-reaction to what the first ICEJ-leader, Jan Willem van der Hoven called the "world's cowardice", one thousand Christian Zionists from forty nations gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles in order to show solidarity and support for Israel's right to decide its own capital city (ICEJ 2013b, 21). The Embassy was established September 30, 1980 in the end of the Feast. The initiative came from a group of evangelical Christian residents in Jerusalem under the leadership of van der Hoeven. At the grand opening, Teddy Kollek, the Mayor of Jerusalem, gave a speech where he praised the Christian initiative (ICEJ 2012b, Wagner 1995, 100). The media did not, however, pay much attention of the opening a Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (Merkley 2002, 171).

Donald Wagner argues the establishment of the ICEJ must be seen in correlation with Likud (the major Zionist right-wing party in Israel) seizing power under Prime Minister Begin. Likud has made good use of its Christian Zionist friends, whose organizations have supported Israel economically and politically in the international community (Wagner 1995, 100).

Shortly after the foundation, the ICEJ settled its headquarters in the previous Chilean Embassy, which had moved to Tel Aviv. The building was originally the house of the Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said whose house was confiscated in 1948 and given to the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (Wagner 1995, 97). Several critics pointed out the ICEJ's use of this house sent out bad signals (Mæland 2009, 227). The ICEJ itself denied the house was the residence of Said. In an interview, David Parsons responded by arguing Said had falsely claimed he and his family had to leave Israel – on the contrary, Parsons argued, Said grew up in Cairo and only visited Jerusalem occasionally – he had therefore no claim to the house (Parsons 2010).

In 1998, the ICEJ moved to 20 Rachel Imeinu Street, in the city district of the German Colony, where it still resides today. Here the Embassy lies behind a tall fence, where visitors need an appointment to come inside.

The ICEJ was intended to be a global organization from the beginning. Today it has branches in 70 countries, and reach out to more than 140 nations (ICEJ 2012a). In Honduras and Guatemala, the ICEJ has established "embassies", which, according to Sizer, have received diplomatic status and have established close bonds to the governments (2004a, 18, Wagner 1995, 109). The different branches worldwide work with spreading the word of Christian Zionism to Christian congregations by holding seminars, giving out information about Israel, holding

political appeals, conferences and summer retreats. In this way, the organization hopes to spread the “truth” about what is going on inside Israel and give international “comfort” to Israel.

3.1.1 The Christian Zionist Congress

In August 1985, the ICEJ held the first Christian Zionist Conference in Basel Switzerland (the same place where Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress). The location was chosen to underscore the ICEJ’s self-conception as an embodiment of the Zionist movement (Merkley 2002). A message from the Israeli Prime Minister Begin greeted the five hundred participants, and the Israeli President Chaim Herzog spoke in person. He thanked the ICEJ for the initiative to establish an embassy in Jerusalem and held a mutual understanding of the Scripture that attached the Jews to Israel – an understanding that was not “universally held in other circles and movements”(quoted in Merkley 2002, 175). Like the Zionist Congress 88 years earlier, the Christian Zionist Congress made a declaration, which stated:

We congratulate the State of Israel and her citizens for their many achievements in the short span of less than four decades... We also lovingly implore you: please try to realize more clearly and to acknowledge more openly that it’s the hand of God, as prophesied in your Holy Scriptures, which has restored the land and gathered in the Exiles, not just the strength of your own hands.... We call on every Jew throughout the world to consider making Aliyah to Israel, and on every Christian to encourage and support their Jewish friends in this freely-taken but God inspired step... [We urge] the nations which are friends of Israel but whose politics totter between the true support and political expediency... to establish your embassies in Jerusalem... and to recognize Judea and Samaria as part of the land... We warn the nations hostile to Israel, including the Arab nations (except Egypt) and the Soviet Union, to stop the obstruction of peace in the Middle East. We also ask the USSR to let all Soviet Jews emigrate to Israel The Congress respectfully asks the World Council of Churches in Geneva to recognize the Biblical link between the Jewish people and their Promised Land as well as the deep Biblical and prophetic dimension of the State of Israel ... We pray and eagerly await the day in which Jerusalem and the Mountain of the Lord will become the center of mankind’s attention when our Lord’s Kingdom will become a reality (quoted in Merkley 2002, 175)

After the Christian Zionist Congresses, the ICEJ restated the declaration, however, it modified the content in line with the diplomatic negotiations between Israel and the Arab states, and as Merkley notes, more or less in line with how Likud approached the matter (2002, 157). In the modified versions of the proclamation, the ICEJ focused on biblical promises of the Arab nations, especially Jordan, Syria and Lebanon and called for these nations to recognize Israel’s right to exist, which will be further elaborated in section 4.2.5 (Merkley 2002)

3.1.2 Objectives

The ICEJ's work is a three-folded mission in its support of Israel: (1) to educate the Christians worldwide of God's purpose for Israel and the surrounding nations in the Middle East, (2) to be a part of the reconciliation between Jews, Christians and Arabs, and (3) to support the Christian congregations in the Holy Land (ICEJ 2012a). These statements are directed towards Christians rather than Jews, and cover the core of Christian Zionism, which is to stand for Israel and call on other Christians to take the same stance. Here the ICEJ uses Isaiah 40:1 as its mandate for supporting Israel: "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!"

Says your God". Hence, "comforting" Israel becomes a particularly important aspect in the ICEJ's work. The reconciliation work in objective two, can seem paradoxical, but about 20 percent of the ICEJ's income is provided to non-Jewish Israeli minorities. In this work, the ICEJ has some cooperation projects with Christians and Druses, but very little with Muslims, although some of the money also goes to various relief organizations, which also covers Israeli Muslims.³³

In 1993, the ICEJ established a wider set of eight objectives, which have been accepted by all its members. These eight objectives further elaborate how Christians are required to act in concern for Israel, and each objective is supported by a biblical verse taken from both the Old and the New Testament. The objectives given by the ICEJ are as follows (ICEJ 2012c):³⁴

1. To show concern for the Jewish people and the reborn state of Israel (Isaiah 40:1).
2. To present to Christians a true understanding of what is taking place in the Land today so that world events may be interpreted in the light of God's Word (Psalm 102:13-16).
3. To be a centre where Christians can gain a biblical understanding of Israel, and learn to be rightly related to the nation (Ephesians 2:12-14).
4. To remind and encourage Christians worldwide to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, the land of Israel, and the Jewish people (Isaiah 62:6-7).
5. To stimulate Christian leaders, churches and organisations to become effective influences in their countries on behalf of Israel and the Jewish people (Genesis 12:1-3).
6. To be part of God's great purposes in bringing the Jews back to Israel (Isaiah 49:22).
7. To begin or assist projects in Israel, for the well-being of all who live there. (Matthew 25:40).
8. To build bridges of reconciliation between Jew and Arab (Isaiah 19:25).

³³ Interview with David Parsons at the ICEJ headquarter 9 Oct. 2013

³⁴ In former publications, there was also a ninth point, which has been taken out: "To take part through these activities in preparing the way of the Lord and to anticipate His reign from Jerusalem" (Widnes 2007, 51).

By studying these objectives, it is noticeable how strong the ICEJ emphasises Christians to take active engagement and support the Jews in the Israeli society. Political and social work is therefore very implicit within these objectives..

Another noticeable point in these objectives is how much emphasis the ICEJ puts on the Old Testament rather than the New Testament – a clear distinction from mainstream Christianity. As seen in the previous chapter, Christian Zionists dismisses traditional amillennial thinking as seen in mainstream Christian Churches³⁵ and give validity to the Old Testament in a non-traditional way. The ICEJ spokesperson, rev. Malcolm Hedding, argues the Covenants in the Hebrew Bible (as Christian Zionists tend to call the Old Testament) affect the world destiny today. Thus, the Old Testament becomes a central scripture for Christian Zionists. This does not mean the New Testament is dismissed: According to Hedding, the New Testament confirms the Covenant with Abraham, which gives the Hebrew Scripture validity today (Hedding 2006d, 5).

The ICEJ spreads the word of God’s restoration process through various media channels such as daily e-mail newsletters, weekly radio and TV programs and their monthly magazine “Word from Jerusalem”. In this way, it hopes to reach out to people all over the world. The media department is intended to be a channel to “provide Christians with truthful, accurate information on current events to fight the media’s often biased coverage on Israel” (ICEJ 2013b, 108). In these information channels, it seems the ICEJ has a two-folded goal of educating Christians about God’s providential plans for Israel, and therefore the ICEJ sells much material on Christian Zionistic theology. The second goal is to provide the Christians a more “balanced” news update, as an alternative to the international media coverage on Israel. How balanced their media coverage actually is, is debatable. The ICEJ cover mostly cases where Jews are discriminated by the international society, where Palestinians have attacked Israeli citizens, or where Middle East conflicts involve Israel, such as the Iran-Israel relations. Moreover, the ICEJ has also a broad coverage and update about its activities in the Israeli society.

3.2 Activities

The ICEJ’s strong emphasis on the Bible’s demand for Christian action is expressed through the social work within the Israeli society. Most of its effort is directed towards the welfare of the

³⁵ Referred to as supersession or replacement theology, where it is believed that the Jews’ status as the chosen people has been replaced by the Church, and the Mosaic Laws have been superseded by the New Testament.

Jewish population in Israel. Social aid programs are one of the most important things the ICEJ does in order to show their support for the Jews. Through aid the Embassy hope to repair the breach between Christians and Jews. Among these projects are social assistance, food provision for poor families, social and educational activities towards children and youth at risk, and relief work to Israelis citizens exposed to war and bombs close to Gaza and in the Occupied Territories. The ICEJ's Aliyah work is the biggest project, which will be further addressed in chapter 5.

In addition to the social and humanitarian work, the ICEJ is also an active voice in the political sphere. In the Israeli parliament, the ICEJ is represented in the lobby organization, Knesset Christian Allies' Caucus (CAC). CAC was founded in 2004, by the Israeli right-wing party Yisrael Beiteinu with a three-folded purpose: "to break down the Knesset's members distrust and ignorance of Christians; recognise the Christian Zionists contribution to Israel; and to work at binding them ever closer to Israel in defence of Judaeo-Christian values" (Clark 2007, 220).

In the European Union, the ICEJ is represented through the European Coalition for Israel (ECI), which works on behalf of Israel in order to influence the EU's foreign policy. This lobby was established in 2003 by the three Christian Zionist organizations the ICEJ, Bridges for Peace and Christian Friends of Israel, with the aim of providing more balanced perspectives on the Israeli-Palestine conflict, to support Israel and to educate Europeans about the history of anti-Semitism in Europe. In, USA, the ICEJ is represented in CIPAC, which works on strengthening US-Israeli relations. Through the lobbies, the ICEJ is able to reach out with its message in forums, where it can influence policymakers to affiliate themselves with friendlier political attitudes towards Israel. This aspect will be further addressed in chapter 6. In addition, the ICEJ shows political support for Israel by arranging events that draws thousands of evangelical tourists to Israel. The most noticeable event is the Feast of the Tabernacles.

3.2.1 Feast of the Tabernacles

Most noticeable of all the ICEJ activities, is perhaps the Feast of the Tabernacles, which annually draws between three and eight thousand pilgrims to Israel. Even though the Feast is a Jewish pilgrim festival, known as Sukkot, the ICEJ believes the nations around Israel are prophesied to celebrate the Feast in Jerusalem, where they will worship the Lord, as it is written in Zechariah 14:16-17 (ICEJ 2013b, 11-3). According to the ICEJ, the Feast is the celebration of God's Kingdom, His care and love and His final triumph on Earth (Hedding 2006e, 5).

Pilgrims come from all over the world for the half week-long celebration of God. Most people travel in delegations with their local church communities. The biggest delegations

usually come from countries such as USA, Brazil, China, Norway, Finland, Russia, South Africa and Germany, but most nations where the ICEJ has local branches are represented. The Feast-program consists of prayer-workshops, seminars regarding Israel's position in the Bible and today's politics, bus excursions, entertainment shows and a special Israeli Guest Night where the ICEJ invites Israeli Jews for a dance show in honour of them. The worship sessions are quite charismatic shaped, with faith healing, dancing and praise songs.³⁶

The most noticeable event during the Feast is the Jerusalem March, which is a massive parade from West to East Jerusalem. Here Israelis from all over the country parade for the celebration of Jerusalem, but also the Christian Zionists are well represented with several thousand participants (Spector 2009, L 2143). In the march, the Christian Zionists walk in sections of nationality, many wearing their national costume and having big flags in order to show spectators national support for Israel.³⁷

3.3 Central staff members

The ICEJ operates with a large staff and economy in order to provide for such an extensive work in the Israeli society. I will focus on some of the most central staff members from the ICEJ who I will return to in the next chapters. In the Jerusalem headquarter, the ICEJ is run by a quite large staff of 30 employees and volunteers. The executive director is today (2014) Jürgen Bühler, an ordained minister in a Pentecostal church in Germany. Bühler became director in 2011, when he succeeded rev. Malcolm Hedding, who had been director since 2000. Hedding now functions as an ICEJ-spokesperson while he serves as an associate minister in a Pentecostal church in Tennessee, USA. Hedding was born in South Africa, where he served as a minister in the Assemblies of God, before he came to Israel in 1986. David R. Parsons serves as Media and Public Relations director. Parsons is originally from USA, where he, as an attorney, served as General Counsel of CIPAC, and was thus heavily involved in lobbying the Israeli cause on Capitol Hill. Now, David Parsons handles press requests, but also writes commentaries on political, historic and religious matters regarding Israel, which is published at the ICEJ's webpage and in *Word from Jerusalem*.

Besides the current staff worker at the ICEJ's headquarter, there are also other worth mentioning. Jan Willelm van der Hoeven from the Netherlands, was the most central person in the founding of the ICEJ and became its first leader under the more modest title of spokesperson. It

³⁶ Observations I made when I assisted the Feast of the Tabernacle in 2013

³⁷ Observations from the Feast 2013.

was under van der Hoeven the Feast of the Tabernacles became an annual event, and it was him who initiated the campaign ‘Mordechai Outcry’ that called for the release of Soviet Jews in 1982. In 1999 van der Hoeven left his position after some discrepancies between his personal and the Embassy’s businesses, in addition to having made some extreme public statements, which was not in line with the ICEJ’s guidelines (Widnes 2007, 58).

In the US-branch, Susan Michael serves as director. She is a graduate in theology from the Oral Roberts University, and is active in educating Christians in the USA about Israel. For example she took the initiative to launch the webpage IsraelAnswers.com (ICEJ 2014b). In St. Petersburg, Howard Flower serves as director of the Russian branch. Flower is also in charge of the Aliyah operations from Western Europe and from the Baltic countries in addition to Central Asian countries. In Norway, Leif Wellerop has functioned as Director before his retirement in 2014. Wellerop has been central in the ICEJ from its establishment in 1980. Dag Øyvind Juliussen is now Director of the Norwegian branch, which is considered to be one of the strongest branches of the ICEJ. In Finland, Ulla Järvillehto, former member of the Finnish parliament and previous Director of the Finnish branch, has been central in assisting Russian Jews to Israel.

3.4 Members and economy

There is no registry of how many members the ICEJ has on a worldly basis, because the Embassy operates with local branches. However, Stephen Sizer claimed the ICEJ has 100,000 members worldwide (numbers from 2004). I have not been able to confirmed this estimate, due to lack of references, and the number has perhaps increased since then (Sizer 2004a, 101). Stephen Sector mentioned the ICEJ “represents millions of evangelicals worldwide,” however, this might be as a representation of Christian Zionists in general and not direct members of the ICEJ (2009, 176). There is no requirement to be a member for attending ICEJ-events. Many Christian Zionists may support the ICEJ without paying member contingent, and therefore it is difficult to give an assumption of how popular the organization actually is, based merely on estimated memberships.

The ICEJ’s economy is mostly based on donations, which based on high level of activity, seems to be quite high. There are no records of how much income the organization has in total, but the US branch assessment notice showed that it had an income of USD 1,6³⁸ million in 2012, while the donation income in Norway the same year was USD 2,6³⁹ million. These figures give some indication of the ICEJ’s income. However, the braches work

³⁸ http://us.icej.org/sites/default/files/en/pdf/icejusa_form_990_sch_a_2012.pdf

³⁹ 16,5 million NOK <http://www.idag.no/aktuelt-oppslag.php3?ID=21098>

independently, and therefore it is difficult to know how much the organization receives in total. The fact that the Norwegian branch seems, to have a bigger donation income than in the US, might have been due to several reasons. In the United States there are more Christian Zionist organizations than in Norway, therefore the ICEJ has higher figures in receiving supporters. Another factor might be that the GDP per capita is higher in Norway than in the US branch, thus Evangelicals in Norway might donate a higher amount of money than in the US.

3.5 Denominational rooting

Although the ICEJ promotes itself as a political organization by the chosen name ‘Embassy’, it is a primarily a religious organization with a clear Christian agenda. According to Weber, the ICEJ itself states its work is purely religious, not political, although, Weber, as among others, notices the line between these two are blurry at times (Weber 2004, 217, see also Sizer 2004a, Wagner 1995).

It is also worth noticing most of the staff members mentioned in section 3.3.1, are associates of Pentecostal movements. The ICEJ is an umbrella organization for all Christians around the world who supports Israel and thus has no requirement of particular denominational belonging, and it does not seem the ICEJ is concerned with denominational belonging – as long as the members are Christians who supports the Israeli cause. Still the ICEJ’s activities are clearly influenced by charismatic movements. This becomes very clear in the annual Feast of the Tabernacles when the ICEJ holds several services containing faith healing, which is not accepted by all Evangelical Christian Zionists. Sizer notes the ICEJ draws support from charismatic evangelical fundamentalist (Sizer 2004a, 128). In chapter 2, we saw how the Pentecostal movement evolved and picked up dispensational elements and combined them with supernatural rituals such as faith healing. At the Feast of the Tabernacles, there were faith healing sessions and charismatic worships songs, which indicated Pentecostal influence. Still, the ICEJ also draws support from other evangelical churches, which is perhaps why the ICEJ exclusively refers to its members as either Christians or evangelicals in order to embrace more Christians. It can also be noted NRC-leaders such as Pat Robertson has endorsed the ICEJ (ICEJ 2013a).

The ICEJ refers to itself as Christian Zionists, even though the label “Christian Zionists” does hold a certain stigma, “Biblical Zionism” is also used (Hedding 2013). A reason for this might be to further unite Jews and Christians common understanding of the Biblical promises to the Jewish people. (Hedding 2013).

There are mainly two concepts, which characterize the ICEJ theology; its view of dispensationalism and how it regards Eretz Israel, which the latter will be addressed in the next chapter. I will here give a brief overview of how the ICEJ has departed from traditional dispensationalism, but still has dispensational elements (see for instance Widnes 2007, 61-4).

3.5.1 A modified dispensationalist theology

It is common for critics of the ICEJ to place the organization within a dispensational model (see for instance Sizer 2004b). However, the ICEJ does not consider itself within those frames (Widnes 2007, 64, Spector 2009, 176). The reason for the Embassy's denouncement of dispensationalism is its lack of orthodox dispensational expectations of the end. One example is the rejection of the Rapture, where true believers will be raptured up prior to the Tribulation. Christians will thus face the same turmoil as Jews and non-believers. Malcolm Hedding argues if God did not let the Christians go through the same test and troubles as the Jews under the Tribulation, then He would not allow Christian martyrs to have suffered throughout centuries of persecutions. In addition, if the church would not be present in the Tribulation, then the Christian love for Israel would be quite hollow (Widnes 2007, 85-6). In other words, the Christians and Jews will be united in facing the great turmoil under the Tribulation. The ICEJ also regards the role of antichrist differently from traditional dispensationalism. Throughout history there have been many minor antichrists who have been sent by God to test the Church, the world and Israel for the purpose to test if they have the true understanding of the Christian faith (Widnes 2007, 87).

Another distinction that separates the ICEJ's theology from traditional dispensationalism is the lack of focus on eschatological events. David Parsons stated the ICEJ focuses more on biblical promises rather than prophecies.

For me the whole motivation – our support for Israel, is not based on future prophecies, but on covenant promises made long ago – 4000 years ago with Abraham. Jews are coming back now because God is faithful with Abraham, and that gives us [the Christian Zionists] a lot of common ground with the Jewish people. Coming to speculating about what is next and prophecies... - if you take three Christians in the same room you got four opinions about the faith prophecies mean... But there is what I consider a certain a good side of the prophecy and a dark side of Armageddon. A lot of that sort of stuff, like Antichrist, - Christians get obsessed with that dark side. As far as motivations in the prophetic passages of our work, I feel in our ministry, we work on the good side,

passages easy to interpret and understand: when you see it happening in our generation, this is something God is doing.⁴⁰

A reason for its apparently lack of interest in eschatological events, can be seen in relation to the Embassy's acceptance from Jews. By rather focusing on the Old Covenant promises than future events, the ICEJ seems to tone down the fact that the Jews, who do not accept conversion, will be forsaken; despite of being "God's chosen people". This does, not mean the eschatology is unimportant, but rather something the ICEJ does not want to focus on. One reason might be the ICEJ's conception of the Bible that requires Christians to be more focused on the promises rather than prophesies. Another reason might be the many critics who has accused the ICEJ for being Anti-Semitic. This accusation is rooted in the orthodox dispensationalist theology operates with the Tribulation where 2/3 of the Jewish population will be destroyed in the Battle of Armageddon. Even though the ICEJ acknowledge this, in a modified view, it is an association the ICEJ – as the Jews' best friends – does not want.⁴¹ In *realpolitik*, it seems hard to follow an orthodox dispensational doctrine.

Another example where the ICEJ diverts from the orthodox form of dispensationalism is rebuilding of the third Temple on top of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem⁴², which many dispensationalists understand as indispensable in the fulfilment of God's plans. Hence, many dispensationalist organizations are active in the Temple Movement, which mostly consist of orthodox Jews. The Temple Movements goal is to rebuild the Third Temple – a controversial act for most inhabitants in Jerusalem, especially for the Muslims (Cohn-Sherbok 2006, 172). The ICEJ recognizes the building of a Third Temple is a step in God's plan, but in *realpolitik*, the controversy of the Temple Movement has caused much political and security concerns. Therefore, the ICEJ has decided not to be involved with the effort to rebuild the Third Temple.⁴³

The ICEJ has in these ways opened up loopholes in the dispensational doctrine, which makes it more adaptable when it works with Jews. Nevertheless, we can see some remaining elements, which implies a dispensationalist view, in for example, the ICEJ's theologically understanding of the Jewish restoration to the contemporary state of Israel as fulfilment of

⁴⁰ Interview held at the ICEJ Head Quarter, 9 Oct. 2013

⁴¹ The conception within Christian Zionism, where the majority of Jews would be sacrificed in the Armageddon, became popular after the publication of the Left Behind Saga (Widnes 2007, 64, see also chapter 2).

⁴² Where the Doom of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque are currently located.

⁴³ Jan Willelm van der Hoeven was of a different opinion, and in 1990, he planned to lead one thousand Feast of the Tabernacles pilgrims to the Temple Mount to pray for the rebuilding of the Third Temple. However, the Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek, who feared violent reactions from the Muslim community, talked van der Hoeven out of it. Van der Hoeven's attitudes towards the need for rebuilding the Temple were partially why he had to leave the ICEJ in 1997 (Weber 2004).

biblical prophecies in the near future, according to Sizer (2004b). It is also a clear distinction between fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecies, which I will come back to in chapter four, and therefore I will continue to discuss the ICEJ as rooted within dispensationalism.

3.6 Reception from the Jewish society

The ICEJ has a mixed reputation among Jews in Israel and abroad. Most Jews, however, happily receive the ICEJ's social and financial aid and are not concerned about the Embassy's eschatological motivations and theological fundament. Others on the other hand are sceptical towards Christian meddling in Jewish businesses – a notion that seems to be rooted in centuries of Jewish persecutions conducted by Christians.

Nevertheless, as already mentioned, many Israeli officials, such as presidents and prime ministers, have spoken positively about the ICEJ, which can be read on the ICEJ-webpage under the endorsement section (ICEJ 2013a). In 1991, the ICEJ received the Knesset Award:

[For] (...) continuous and energetic activity in education and information in Israel and abroad to strengthen the ties between Jews and Christians, for its activity to bring understanding between Jews and Arabs in Israel and for its activity to deepen Jewish and Zionist awareness among Christians around the world and for encouraging immigration to Israel" (ICEJ 2012b).

It becomes clear that the politicians appreciate the ICEJ's migration work; however, it would not have been possible for the ICEJ to reach out to the Jewish society without Jewish collaboration partners, which I will further elaborate in chapter five.

I introduced this chapter with the endorsement of ex-President Begin's warm words of the ICEJ's foundation in 1980. Since then, the ICEJ has received much gratitude from Israeli presidents and prime ministers, something that the ICEJ perhaps can take as a divine sign that their "comfort" of Israel is on the right course in God's plan. In this chapter, I sought to highlight how the ICEJ has evolved from starting as a protest movement against the international community's treatment of Israel when East-Jerusalem was declared as a part of the Israel's capital city in 1980. From then the ICEJ has grown to a large organization that runs a wide set of activities in the Israeli society, but also works to promote support for Israel among Christians at a global scale. Among its main objectives are the comfort of Israel and the participation in returning the Jews to Israel. In the next chapter, I will further analyse the theological conceptions that lies behind this massive interest in supporting Israel and need for restoring the Jews to Israel.

4 The narrative behind restoration of Eretz Israel

“We are not living in post-biblical times, but in actual biblical times”.⁴⁴

Rev. Malcolm Hedding, ICEJ-spokesperson (2006b, 29)

When Israel was established as a nation in 1948 it was, in the view of the ICEJ, not a result of political or secular forces; the establishment was the will of God. God had finally released them from the nearly two thousand-year banishment from Palestine. For the Christian Zionists, this action was certainly a divine sign and a proof that God is true to his word.

As seen in section 2.4, the 1980s marked a shift in how millenary Christians told the stories about God’s role in cosmic history, which thus enabled new forms of human actions of influencing the politicians and live virtue lives in accordance with the Bible (Harding 1994, 58). The ICEJ constructs a narrative where it understands biblical passages as commands for Christians to take an active part in the restoration of Israel, and thus the Christians receive a central part in world events, while at the same time believing that God is in absolute control of the course of world history. In this chapter, I will analyse how the ICEJ tells the story about God’s providential plans for the world. In doing this, the ICEJ creates a narrative where it is called to be the gentiles who will contribute in God’s soteriological plan.

By looking further into the ICEJ theological conceptions, I seek to answer my first research question: How does the ICEJ present the biblical narrative of a Jewish return to Israel and the preservation of Israel as a Jewish state as part of a soteriological scheme? The social scientist Alfred Schütz said “It is impossible to understand human conduct by ignoring its intentions, and it is impossible to understand human intentions by ignoring the settings in which they makes sense” (quoted in Czarniawska 1998, 4). In other words, in the ICEJ’s setting, the Bible is infallible, and it is with this in mind it is necessary to understand how the ICEJ constructs a narrative where human executive action is required.

I will primarily focus on four booklets published by the ICEJ as educational material, aimed on informing congregations about Christian Zionism. These booklets have been chosen partly because they are most accessible and partly because they are important in the ICEJ’s education material. The series includes *Basis of Christian Support for Israel*, *The Heart of Biblical Zionism*, *The Great Covenants of the Bible* and *The New Testament and Israel*. However, interviews and observations from fieldwork done in relation to this thesis will be used as supplement in understanding the motives of the ICEJ’s active engagement. At the end

⁴⁴ Original language: «Vi lever ikke i en post-bibelsk tid, men vi lever i bibelsk tid».

of the chapter, I will examine the proclamations the ICEJ made on the four International Christian Zionist Congresses, where the organization encouraged the Christian world to take a stance for Israel and help Jews make Aliyah. By looking at these proclamations, we can see how the ICEJ has used its narrative to call for Christians to take action. The chapter, however, will, start with some perspectives on how the ICEJ reads the Bible.

4.1 The ICEJ's conception of the Bible

When Casanova wrote that the dispensational premillennial reading of the Bible was “new and esoteric”, he did not mean esoteric in the strict sense of the word’s connotations of exclusiveness, inwardness, “a discipline of the arcane”, or a secrecy, something only a certain group of initiated people can access. He rather used it as an analytical tool to describe the new way of revealing the Scripture’s hidden meanings of historic and scientific facts, and the dispensationalists’ calculation of when the world would end (Casanova 1994, 141; see also chapter 2).

The ICEJ-clergies continues this legacy by interpreting the Bible both literally and futuristically. Even though the ICEJ interprets the Bible in a literal way, there are also hidden symbols that need *esoteric* interpretation, and cannot be read purely literal. E.g. although the events of the Revelation are read literally, there are also symbols that need further interpretation. In Rev.12:1-2 it says: “And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth”. According to the ICEJ-spokesperson, rev. Malcolm Hedding, the pregnant woman in the verse is the *today’s* Israel. Hedding argues the image with the stars, moon and sun is taken from Gen. 37.9: 9 where Josef tells his family of his dream: “Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, ‘Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me’”.⁴⁵ Hedding argues this is an image of modern Israel and the twelve tribes of Israel, which are returning nowadays (Hedding 2006a, 25-6). It is therefore reasons to assume that there are some hidden meanings in the Bible, which need to be revealed.

According to Stephen Sizer, the ICEJ’s way of interpreting the Bible is called *peshet* hermeneutics. Peshet is Aramaic and means simply ‘interpretation’, it distinguished itself from more traditional Protestant interpretation, which has also been literalistic, but has taken historical, cultural, grammatical and theological context, into account. The peshet

⁴⁵ Joseph is the twelfth tribe.

hermeneutics is ultra-literal and where the prophetic parts are “seen as pre-written history; and eschatology fulfilled in the interpreter’s generation” (Sizer 2004a, 108).

The Bible has already foretold the course of history, which takes place today. Harding’s perspective of that dispensational belief is a way of *knowing* history is central here. The contemporary events taking place in the world today is seen as evidence of that God is true to His word, according to David Parsons⁴⁶. The ICEJ knows what will happen in the future and why events are happening today – such as the return of the Jews to Israel. However, this would mean that everything in the world is predetermined. This seems not be the case with the ICEJ. The ICEJ has not stated to know the exact course of history, for example, there is a possibility that Israel might lose some land territories, which we will see in this chapter in section 4.2.4. The historian Paul Boyer noted that prophesy believers can circumvent such problem by understanding that the overall course of history is determined, but that there is a “realm of freedom” within the predestined order (1998, 454). It seems that the ICEJ has taken this position in its narrative.

Despite the fact that most scholars will argue that the ICEJ has roots within dispensationalism (see chapter 3), and many will claim its actions are prophetically (eschatologically) motivated, the Embassy itself much reject this (see e.g. Sizer 2004a, Wagner 1995, Spector 2009). The ICEJ’s (self) comprehension of the biblical text is that Christians must support Israel out of much deeper reasons than merely because of Israel’s part in Christian Zionistic eschatology. Hedding emphasizes that the primary reason of the Christian support lies in the covenants in which God made with the people of Israel. However, according to Hedding, the biblical prophets play a crucial role, because these texts confirm the covenants between God and the Israeli people, but this is not the source of foundation of the support in itself (Hedding 2006a, 5). The ICEJ has a well-developed theology that sets the fundament of its practical work. By reading the Bible the ICEJ has stated that its mandate is from heaven (Buehler 2012). We can therefore see how the ICEJ’s conception of the Bible, creates a narrative in which there is a mandate for the ICEJ to be active agents in the in history. I will also argue that the ICEJ draws on charismatic elements in its interpretation of the Bible, which comes from its high influence of Pentecostalism. We can see, for example when the Norwegian ICEJ-Director, Øyvind Juliussen, proclaimed that the Bible is a “closed” book – that is so until God opens it up by the Holy Spirit (TVVisjon 2014). Other examples of charismatic influence are evident in how much emphasis there is on personal testimonies. An

⁴⁶ In interview at the ICEJ-headquarter in Jerusalem, 9 Oct. 2013.

example here is Howard Flower, who in a vision from God was called to work with Jewish Aliyah in Russia (Flower 2011c). Such personal testimonies can contribute as motivating factors in the effort to work for a restoration of Eretz Israel.

4.2 Restoration of Eretz Israel – A matter of saving the world

“Israel” is the word in the Bible which is mentioned the most times [c. 2465] after “God” and “Lord”, according to Dag Øyvind Juliussen (TVVisjon 2014). The central place Israel has in the Bible indicates the important position Israel has in the world, because the Bible is understood as the true Word of God through the Holy Spirit and is thus seen as a Jewish document where Israel’s divine right for the land is stated (Hedding 2006a, 23). It is therefore important for the ICEJ to communicate the divine role Israel has in God’s soteriological scheme.

I will not go into a detailed study of how the ICEJ has interpreted specific Bible verses and how the Embassy regards world events in light of the Bible, due to space shortage. However, a brief overview, will be given over central themes the ICEJ regards as important arguments for why Christians need to support Israel and must be active agents in the restoration of Eretz Israel.

4.2.1 The Covenants

The fundament for the restoration of Israel lies on the covenants, which God made with the Jewish people (which also were extended to the rest of the world). The ICEJ claim, God has made four covenants with the Jewish people, who has been given the task of administrating these covenants and pass them on to the rest of the nations (Hedding 2006b, 5). The covenants are the following: The Covenant with Abraham; the Mosaic Covenant; the New Covenant and the Davidic Covenant.

The Abrahamic Covenant, taken from Genesis 12, is the most important Covenant because it is through this covenant that God decides to save the world through the kin of Abraham – being the Jews. The Jews thus receive the status as God’s chosen people who are given the property of the land of Canaan. The covenant with Abraham is thus regarded as God’s promise to save the world – a promise the ICEJ claims can never be broken⁴⁷ (Hedding 2006b, 8-10, 2006c, 17-23). However, there is an executive covenant, which is the one God made with Moses, in Exodus 19. From this the ICEJ believes one cannot come to Jesus

⁴⁷ This is where Christian Zionism differs from mainstream Christianity, because mainstream Christianity claims this was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

without following “The Law”. “The Law” is not understood as Halacah – the Jewish law, it is understood as the Ten Commandments. Hence, the Mosaic covenant is the instructions, which will lead the sinners to Jesus, as stated in the Galatians 3 (Hedding 2006b, 11-7). This again, leads to the New Covenant – the covenant, where the nations were included in the covenant with Abraham, as prophesised in Jeremiah 31. According to Hedding, Jesus came to the world as the Jews’ servant, and confirmed God’s promises to Israel, which is explained in the Galatians 3. Jesus is thus the cure for all sins, and all who are with Christ becomes the children of Abraham. This does not mean that the Jews lose their central place as the redemptive *vehicle*, because God does not break his promises, and there is no proof in the New Testament that God has broken His promise with the Jews. On the contrary, Hedding argues that Roman 9 confirms that God’s promises belong to the Jewish people (Hedding 2006b, 17-21).⁴⁸

The final fulfilment will happen through the Davidic covenant, when God promised King David that his throne would rule for all eternity, as written in First Chronicle 17. This is seen as the prophecy of the Second Coming of Christ, when he will return to earth and establish the Millennia Kingdom. The proof of this is the fact that the Jews are now returning to Israel to communicate the last covenant to the world, which Hedding argues is seen in Ezekiel 37:24-28:

David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.

Jacob is understood as Israel⁴⁹, which is today re-established by the return of the Jewish people, and is a sign that the fulfilment is near (Hedding 2006b, 26-29). The last covenant is thus the apocalyptic covenant, with the son of David – Christ coming, who will judge humankind and reign a millennium, as written in Revelations (Hedding 2006b, 26-30).

⁴⁸ The roles of the Jews and the gentiles remain distinctly separate even through the latter, through choosing the path with Jesus, also become included in the pact with Abraham.

⁴⁹ In the Bible, Jacob changed his name to Israel after his encounter with God in gen 35:10. He then fathered the origin forefathers of what became known as the twelve tribes of Israel.

However, Christ will not return before Israel invites Him back, as written in Acts 3. Hedding argues, all the nations must first have heard the Gospel then the Jews will be the remnant which will bring the King back just as Judah was the last to bring King David back, as seen in second Samuel (Hedding 2006b, 34-5). In other words, Hedding argues that Jesus, as the King of the Jews, must be invited back by his people before he will return, just as King David did. We can already see here how the ICEJ places the Jews and Israel in the centre of God's plan. The four covenants are here strictly linked together and thus cannot be separated, such as in mainstream churches that confesses supersession theology.

4.2.2 Israel's position in the Bible

As we have seen above, the covenants created a space for Israel as God's vehicle for world redemption. It is not answered why God chose Israel as the redemptive vehicle, "He just did so because He loves *her*", but this is not because Israel has any special abilities or strength Hedding argues (2006a, 13).⁵⁰ Central for Israel's special position is what Hedding refers to as "Israel's triplicate call". This confirms that Israel is not just a random geographical area in the Middle East, but rather a vital tool in God's soteriological scheme. According to Hedding Israel's three calls are the following: the birthing call, the suffering call and the priestly call. Through these calls, Hedding argues, that Israel will give birth to redemptive "products", which will come to all human kind, e.g. Jesus. However, Israel will suffer for communicating the word of God, because the Devil does all in his power to prevent the fulfilment of God's plan for the world. Nevertheless, God's plan for the world will not be lost to evil, because God already predetermined that the Jewish people would give Jesus' death to the world, which offered salvation for the gentiles. Even though Hedding is clear on the fact that the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, he still argues that the Jews cannot be held responsible for this action because the Jews did not know what they were doing (Hedding 2006a, 24-38).

Despite the fact that Israel receives a central place with God in the ICEJ's narrative, it does not mean that God loves Israel more than other nations in the world, according to Hedding. To explain this, Hedding uses a metaphor of a pregnant woman who is paid more attention to and cared for by her family, than the other family members because she has a special role in the family, but this does not mean that the rest of the family is loved any less. Israel is thus entitled to more attention and care by the nations around, because it is *she* who

⁵⁰ The ICEJ always refers to Israel as female, as done in the Old Testament; this might strengthen the direct connection between Israel today and Israel in the Old Testament.

gave birth to the Messiah, and it is within *her* Christ will return and create the Millennial Kingdom. Accordingly the whole purpose of Israel's existence is the coming of the Messiah, who will give human kind redemption (Hedding 2006a, 9-10). A central aspect in the ICEJ narrative, it is that the Church has throughout history denied "the pregnant woman", a policy, which the ICEJ regard as disgraceful (Hedding 2006a, 31).

As we can see, Israel is essentially in God's plan. Since the Jewish people constitutes the nation of Israel, how significant is it that Israel is placed in the biblical land of Canaan and not in any other geographical location? In the ICEJ narrative, the geographical location becomes essential, because Israel was the land in which God promised Abraham, that his kin would hold the land for eternity, and from which Israel was exiled and promised to return. In this location it is also prophesied that when Christ does return to Earth, this will happen on the Mount of Olives. It is therefore important that Israel holds this specific location.

4.2.3 Salvation of the Jews

While the death of Jesus provided salvation to the gentiles, the Jews have yet to be saved, according to Hedding. The fact that the Jews are considered as God's chosen people, does not change the other fact that the Jews need to receive Christ as their saviour on order to be saved. But according to Hedding, this will automatically happen when the Jews are returning to Israel from the exile. According to the ICEJ, the Book of Isaiah teaches that there will be two exiles and two returns for the Jewish people; the first being the exile in Babylon in 586 BCE, and the second exile after the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE, which has lasted up until now. Furthermore, the ICEJ interprets Ezekiel 36 to the meaning of that the Jewish homecoming will happen in two phases; the first being the physical phase, and the second being a spiritual phase. In other words, the ICEJ believes that by Jewish immigration to Israel, the Jews will have a spiritual resurrection where a dissemination of God's love and the Holy Spirit will embrace them (Hedding 2006a, 40-1).

In the ICEJ narrative, this is a very important detail because then the ICEJ does not need to evangelize the Jews in order for them to receive salvation. The conception of two homecomings, one physical and one spiritual, makes the ICEJ work among the Jews much easier, which will be further elaborated in section 5.3.1.

4.2.4 Evil in this world

The ICEJ has a dualistic worldview where the world is divided into good and evil. In this worldview there can be no neutral actors, and those who are not with God, becomes under Satan's dominion (See also Widnes 2007, 79). The ICEJ thus uses the picture of Babylon and Canaan from the Book of Revelation to describe the dichotomy of the unsaved and the saved. Babylon is not purely a spiritual place, it is also seen as a physical place where the evilness has its high seat, because it was, in the Garden of Eden where man fell from grace, and from there God commanded Abraham to leave Ur and travel to the promised land of Canaan (Hedding in Widnes 2007, 90-1).

Despite the fact that the ICEJ believes that God is in absolute power in the world, it is the evilness that dominates the world. In order to avoid a theodicy paradox of why bad thing happens to Israel today, this is explained with Israel's suffering call. In Genesis 15 it is written when Abraham accepted the covenant from God, evil vultures attacked the covenant, which thus symbolized a fallen world dominated by evil, according to Hedding (2006a, 28-9).

With the Jewish physical and spiritual resurrection when Israel is restored, follows the downfall of evil and demonic influence on the world. At this time the "King will come" to the Mount of Olive, and he will establish the Millennium Kingdom and reign with a "rod of iron", as written in Revelations 19 (Hedding 2006a, 42). However, evil does all in its power to prevent this from happening, and in this manner, the ICEJ explains the Middle East conflict. The unfair treatment of Israel by the international community and distortion of the conflict with Palestine, is explained by the ICEJ as the "unclean spirits" in Revelation 16:13-16, which came out of the dragon's mouth as frogs and has went to the four corners of the world to seduce kings and politicians (Hedding 2006a, 40-3).⁵¹

In the ICEJ's narrative, the Middle East conflict must not be reduced to a secular or humanistic conflict, because the purpose of the conflict is the total destruction of the Jewish state, according to Hedding (2006a, 42). A confederacy of nations, seduced by evil, will try to destroy Israel and the Jewish people, just as Magog and Gog in Ezekiel 38. Throughout history, there have been many examples of such implementations (Hedding 2006c, 7-8).⁵²

⁵¹ As noted in the previous chapter, the ICEJ has a conception of the antichrist who will attempt to deceive the nations from following God by offering peace and deny the truth. The ICEJ believes there has been several minor antichrists, according to Widnes (2007, 85-8). sent by God to test humankind in order to see whether people are on the "right side in the spiritual battle". An example of one antichrist is Yassir Arafat (2007, 89).

⁵² The Third Reich is understood as the last attempt to destroy Israel

While evil of foreign enemies threatens the existence of Israel. However, the Jews have their own duty to ensure the continued existence of Israel. Even though the Jews are now returning from the last exile, there is no guaranties that Israel will not lose land or that the Jews might be expelled a third time. The fact that the ICEJ opens up for the possibility of a third exile, can be seen as contradictory, however, according to Hedding, this is an unlikely possibility because the Bible only mentions two exiles (Hedding 2006c, 13-4). According to Hedding, the Jews must live in reconciliation with God, unless, He will discipline them, which might result in loss of property – as history has shown (Hedding 2006c, 27-37). God uses the nations, which are seduced by the Devil, as a tool to discipline Israel. The intention of the nations is evil and therefore the nations must also prepare for destruction by the hand of God. Hedding claims that no kingdom that has opposed Israel and the Jews through history, has survived, thus, it is important for the ICEJ to support Israel. In other words, in the ICEJ's narrative God has controlled the downfall of the empires and kingdoms that have been in conflict with Israel and the Jewish people. According to Hedding, God holds a complete power over Israel. Israel is a small and weak nation, says Hedding, thus God selected Israel to be the redemptive tool, through which God can demonstrate His power (Hedding 2006c, 13).

From Hedding's argumentation, it is evident that Israel has a special position in the Bible, and thus becomes much more than a geographical area or a home nation for the Jewish people. When the world salvation is dependent on the future existence of Israel, it is thus important for the ICEJ to support Israel by supporting Jewish immigration, defending Israel in the public debate and include Israel in prayers and blessings.

4.2.5 The Middle East Conflict in a theological context

As I mentioned above, Hedding argued that the Middle East conflict must be seen in a theological context and not as a secular dispute over land. Hedding writes that the Arab population has not yet “received a significant visitation from Heaven⁵³” (Hedding 2006c, 42). One can understand this to mean that because Islam holds a strong position in the Middle East means that the people in this region have not been subject to extensive proselytization.⁵⁴

In the third International Christian Zionist Congress, the ICEJ stated that the Muslim term “Allah” – out of a biblical stance, is anti-Jewish and anti-Christian distortion of how God revealed

⁵³ Original translation in Norwegian: «Vet dere kjære venner, at dette er den siste folkegruppen på jordens overflate som enda ikke har opplevd en betydelig visitasjon fra himmelen?» (Hedding 2006c, 42).

⁵⁴ Because the geographical Babylon (today Iraq) is understood as the seat of evil, the ICEJ indicates this could be the reason why the church has failed to evangelised the area for almost 2000 years (quoted in Widnes 2007, 91).

Himself to the Patriarchs, the Kings and the Prophets of the Bible in Israel. Further, the ICEJ stated that the elements within Islamic faith, which promote hatred towards Israel and the Jewish people, will lead to evilness, disorders and spiritual restraints, which will affect individuals, successors and their nations. The ICEJ argues also that there is nothing in the Quran or in the Islamic faith, which validates its claim on the Temple Mount, as a direct contrast to the biblical and historical claim to the site (IKAJ).⁵⁵ The Middle East conflict must thus be seen in a theological light, according to the ICEJ, because Islam is trying to gain terrain in the Middle East, but Israel stands in its way.

Radical Islamic theology and its desire to return the region to Dar al-Islam [House of Islam] is the one core issue that very few people acknowledge. Even though you have groups like Hamas riding on very clear Islamic theological principles, the world makes the constant error of avoiding the theological nature of the conflict. Instead of trying to deal with it in a secular humanistic, political context. They can never solve it because they won't own with the truth that we are dealing with a conflict with Islam. If you don't start from the theological foundation, (...) then you can never address this thing honestly. (...) The source of the conflict is a radical Islamic need to verify their revelation by the dismantling of the Jewish state (Malcolm Hedding in interview with the Jerusalem Post, January 2007, Gilbert 2007).

In the quote, Hedding argued that radical Islam is striving to turn the entire Middle East region to dar al-Islam (the House of Islam). Israel is standing in the way of this, hence the Middle East conflict becomes a conflict between good and evil, in the ICEJ's narrative.

The Arabs is accounted for in the Bible where most will be a subject for salvation, because God shares a love for them, as he does for all people, but first the surrounding Arab nations must play out their part in God's soteriological scheme. This part is understood by the ICEJ as the surrounding nations, which God uses as a penalty when convicting Israel for its disobedience, but in the second round, these nations themselves will be convicted. It is first when Israel is redeemed that Egypt and Assyria (today Syria) will receive salvation, when the Lord reveals Himself to them in the Messianic Age (Hedding 2006c, 42-3, 2006a, 42, see also Isaiah 19:18-25). This does not mean that it is only Egypt and Syria, which will be subject to salvation: the ICEJ states that the church is growing in many places in the Middle East (Bühler 2013).

⁵⁵ To some extent the ICEJ separates between radical and moderate Islam, however it is difficult to understand to what extent this separation includes.

4.2.6 The Gentiles and Israel dichotomy

In section 2.2, it was explained that the dispensational doctrine distinguished between Jews and gentiles, where the Church's true believers would be raptured up before the Tribulation. Already mentioned is also that the ICEJ believes that the gentiles will face the Tribulation with the Jews, and that there will not be any Rapture, and that like the gentiles, the Jews can only receive salvation through Christ. Like Widnes also mentions, it seems therefore as if the ICEJ attempts to tone down the division between Jews and gentiles (2007, 77).

Even though the ICEJ attempts to rub out the line between the Jews and the gentiles, Hedding refers to the Jews as gentiles who has been brought into a special relationship with God, in the service of world redemption (Hedding 2006a, 20, Widnes 2007, 78). Widnes suggested that the way the ICEJ attempt to erase the division between Jews and gentiles, is a way of projecting their own battle and suffering into the Jewish battle and suffering, for the end achieving victory (Widnes 2007, 78). I do not find any clear indication in within the ICEJ that it attempts to be a part in the Jew's battles and suffering. On the contrary, as I will argue below, that in the ICEJ's narrative there are clearly separate roles for gentiles and the Jews in God's providential plan.

4.3 “See. I will beckon to the Gentiles”

In the ICEJ website's position statements, Hedding wrote: “[The apostle] Paul demonstrates, time and time again, that theology must have a practical outworking” (Hedding). The statement was aimed at mainstream Christian churches, which the ICEJ has criticized for being more preoccupied with discussing their theological position than acting on it. The ICEJ has, however, constructed a narrative where it has opened up for agency where the gentiles receives the special role in God's providential plan. The engagement of the gentiles is therefore a matter of warning the nations of their certain destruction, if they do not turn to support the Israeli state.

The most central Bible-verse the ICEJ uses, is Isaiah 40:1 “Comfort, O comfort ye My people, says your God”. The ICEJ has stated that this verse is its “mandate from heaven”. Following the verse line comes Isiah 40:2 “Speak comfort to Jerusalem and cry out to her, that her warfare has ended (...)”. Throughout the thirty decades, the ICEJ has acted on this Bible-verse and been active in comforting and supporting the Israeli society in various ways, as pointed out in the previous chapter. The latter part in the last quote states that Israeli' warfare has ended, which is

interpreted as being a prophecy of that the war and conflict that Israel is involved in, will end, and with the ending of the war, the whole world will be amazed:

Above all, God alone will get the glory for He will unravel a problem that has been far too great for the world to deal with. Not even the church has been able to sort this one out! Indeed much of the church today sees no biblical significance in Israel's restoration. They believe it is merely a political accident orchestrated by the United Nations (Buehler 2012)

Thus, there will come a day when God will reveal His purpose for Israel, and God will reveal that all political and historical actions, and events concerning Israel have happened under His will, - not by any coincidence. Israel is the vehicle of world's redemption, but even though the nations in the world may act with evilness towards Israel today, there will come a "day" all the world will know that Israel exists for their blessing and not for their cursing", and until this day comes, the ICEJ will "stay the course" with her" (Buehler 2012). Another motivation for the ICEJ's support of the Jews is the blessings God gives to those who support Jews. In Gen 12:1-3 God said to Abraham to leave his old country and go to the land of Canaan where God would make him a great nation; "I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Hedding 2006a, 20).

It is written in Isaiah 49:22: "See, I will beckon the Gentiles, I will lift up My banner to the peoples; they will carry your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders". This quote is the most important argument the ICEJ uses to legitimize the assisted migration work. In this Bible-verse, God calls out on the gentiles (in modern days, Christian Zionists) to help the Jews back to Israel. There will, however, only be a few of the gentiles who will heed the word of God and act to His will, the rest of the nations will fail this and be misled by evilness, as seen in the previous subchapter (Widnes 2007, 80). Those gentiles who do obey God, are referred to as the "fullness of the gentiles" from Romans 11:25: "Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come on Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in".

4.3.1 The fishers and the hunters

Escorting the Jews from today's Diaspora to Israel is a central mission in the ICEJ's narrative. The ICEJ has constructed its narrative to provide the gentiles a central role in the ingathering of the Jewish people, where the Jewish homecoming, as explained above, is essential for the fulfilment of God's providential plan.

Here the ICEJ uses Jeremiah 16:16 to legitimize its contribution to bring Jews to Israel. This Bible verse says: “‘Behold, I will send for many fishermen’, says the Lord, ‘and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks’”. The ICEJ can thus take the role as the fishers in its narrative. This picture from Jeremiah is used in the ICEJ’s practical work. An example here is the way the ICEJ calls its search for Jews in the Diaspora “Net fishing” and in an article by the ICEJ’s Aliyah director, Howard Flower, it is explained how the ICEJ “fish” for Jews in the Diaspora.⁵⁶

It is not clear how the ICEJ understands the word “hunters” in the Jeremiah 16:16, as I quoted above. In the verse, the hunters will chase the Jews from every mountain, hills and holes in rocks. Sizer, however, argues that it refers to public anti-Semitism, because the ICEJ’s first leader, Jan Willelm van der Hoeven, emphasized that even the Jews living in the USA will one day emigrate to Israel, and that God will use anti-Semitism in order to achieve this (Sizer 2004a, 223). If it is correct that the ICEJ understands the hunters as anti-Semitism, it opens to some extent up a paradox, because then the ICEJ is dependent on anti-Semitism to chase the Jews out of the Diaspora, while at the same time, it stresses that the nations should support Israel in order to avoid God’s destruction. Nevertheless, the ICEJ’s focus on its role as the “fishers” becomes the most dominant focus in its narrative of assisting Jews to Israel.

4.3.2 Personal motivations

Apart from entwining biblical passages of the role of the gentiles in its narrative, the ICEJ also puts emphasis on more personal motivation where it attempts to make up for the poorly treatment the Jews have received from the Church throughout the centuries. However, the most important motivation seems to be that if God was true with His promises to the Jews, then He would also hold His promises toward the Gentiles. The latter aspect can be seen in PR-Director David Parsons reply when he answered the question of what motivates the Christians to help the Jewish people:

It’s because of Gods faithfulness, it shows His nature and character as a faithful God that He promised; He scattered the Jews, but no matter where He scattered them, He will always bring them back as it is in His covenant with Abraham and the Mosaic Covenant written by Moses.

⁵⁶ There is also a reference to fishers in Matthew 4:19 where Jesus says to his disciples: “(...) ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men’”. The latter verse can, according to Widnes, also be interpreted to strengthen the verse of Jeremiah and therefore increase the Christian Zionists’ legitimation as to follow Jesus (Widnes 2007, 113).

We look at this as we see the Aliyah as an evidence of a God who is faithful to His promises. (...) He keeps His promises, and if He keeps His promises to the Jewish people, He will keep His promises to us as well.⁵⁷

In other words, the motivation for the ICEJ is that it sees the return of the Jews and the restoration of Israel, as an evidence of God holding true to His promise for the Jews, while at the same time holding His promise for the gentiles. The fact that the Jews are now returning to Israel from the Diaspora, is a clear God-evidence. Howard Flower gave somewhat the same answer when asked of the Christian motivations for Jewish support:

My teacher and mentor, said: In the Bible God talks a lot about the Jewish people and Israel and gentiles should help the Jewish people. That is the most important part. In many places [in the Bible] you can see: “I will rise the banners of the gentiles (...). Why is God bringing these people home? He is doing it as a sign to the unsaved peoples.”⁵⁸

Thus, the Jewish homecoming today is a factual sign of that God is in complete power and that the “unsaved” must act on this evident sign.

Both David Parsons and Howard Flower stated that the Christian motivations for helping the Jews was deeper rooted than just biblical conviction. Both mentioned that the treatment of Jews through-out history was a motivation for their engagement, and when analysing what the ICEJ has published on their web sites and in their magazine *Word From Jerusalem*, it is evident that a motivating factor is a deep empathy for the Jewish suffering. David Parsons explained his personal motivation for helping the Jews:

Because you knew they came from bad backgrounds, difficult circumstances so you prefer them over your selves, and when we heard of what the Jews have been through, and suffering, a lot of there is a love that comes out, you are a surrogate father, and it is not necessarily a natural blood relation, but you get a special relationship where you treat them as your own, and you would give them your sacrifice because you know, you wish them better than you had yourself, so I can really identify this is as a real motivation factor by the Holy Spirit, where you want the best, you know their ancestors have been through centuries of suffering.⁵⁹

The use of “surrogate father” as a metaphor for describing motivations for helping Jews, is a quite strong rhetorical tool to explain how deep their love for the Jews goes. By using such a

⁵⁷ Interview at the ICEJ Headquarter, 9 October 2013

⁵⁸ Interview held on the International Convention Center Jerusalem, 22 September 2013.

⁵⁹ Interview at the ICEJ headquarters 9 October 2013.

metaphor, might also be an attempt to show that Christians do not only support the Jews because “the Bible says so” but that their love for the Jews is deep and genuine. Nevertheless, this motivation has led to an engagement for the Jewish people that has become highly political.

4.4 A theopolitical engagement

As we have seen so far, the ICEJ has used biblical passages to create a narrative in which the ICEJ has received a role as an active agent in the course of history with the task of supporting Israel and assisting the Jews back from the Diaspora. The aspect of action is understood as being particularly important by the ICEJ. This can also be seen in Hedding argument, when he stated that “discussing theology is good, it cannot be the “be the end in itself” - a clear critique to mainstream church leaders, which the ICEJ has criticised remaining passive in the conflict (Hedding). As noted in the previous chapter, ICEJ has held four International Christian Zionist Congresses, where the aim of the congresses was to call on the world’s Christians to take action in God’s soteriological plans by helping Jews make Aliyah and support Israel, but it also encouraged Jews to consider making Aliyah:

We call on Jews throughout the world to consider making Aliyah to Israel, and on every Christian to encourage and support their Jewish friends in this freely-taken, but God-inspired step (quoted in Merkley 2002, 175).

This appeal was repeated in the second Christian Zionist Congress in 1988, where the ICEJ also discouraged emigration from Israel. At the same time the ICEJ also appealed to the Jews for “cessation of abortion” in order to stimulate population growth. According to Widnes, this statement was made in order to further encourage the Israeli inhabitants to settle in the Occupied Territories, because it is difficult to claim a right to the land without having people to settle there (2007).

In 1996, the third Congress was held in Jerusalem. The proclamation here, further confirmed the need for Christians to sustain their Aliyah work. In statement six of the declaration, the ICEJ proclaimed that the modern ingathering of the Jewish people to Eretz Israel and the rebirth of Israel is a fulfilment of biblical prophecies in both the Old and New Testament. The next statement proclaimed that the Scripture instructs Christians to acknowledge the Hebrew roots of their belief and further actively help and participate in

God's scheme to ingather the Jewish people and restoration of the nation Israel. In the same proclamation, the ICEJ listed up the significance of the Congress' resolutions. Here the eighth statement, concerned Jewish immigration to Israel. The ICEJ has a persistent concern for the destiny of the Jewish people, who are in danger in several locations, and Christians must therefore seek to encourage and help in the ongoing process of bringing them who are exiled to Israel. The danger is here referred to as the anti-Semitism, which especially associated with the increasing Muslim population in Europe. This could potentially be a threat with two outcomes; it might function as the "hunters" who will chase the Jews out of the Diaspora, or it could lead to that the Jews loses their Jewish identity and remains in the Diaspora.⁶⁰ However, the ICEJ believes anti-Semitism is an important factor for why Jews chooses to make Aliyah.

The proclamation further stated that the ICEJ is committed to work with Israel and to encourage the Diaspora to fulfil the vision and the goal of assemble the vast majority of the Jewish people in Israel (IKAJ). The proclamation also constituted nine points of why Christians must support Israel and argued for Israel's right to defend itself was rooted in biblical promises for Israel to hold the territories. The ICEJ held the fourth and last Congress in Jerusalem 2001, where the proclamation did not add anything new to the previous statements in regard of Aliyah. However, the proclamation further extended the importance for the Christians to continue their support to Israel and the return of the Jewish people to all parts of Eretz Israel (IKAJ).

From the proclamations it becomes evident how the ICEJ uses the Bible in order to take political engagement in the support and restoration of Eretz Israel. The ICEJ has always had a strong engagement in the political sphere. In 1996, Ulla Järvillehto stated it is impossible to overlook God's political actions for Israel, – if one takes the Bible serious, thus support of Israel and Jewish immigrations is a matter for politics, and therefore the ICEJ cannot be neutral (Järvillehto in Widnes 2007, 102). Hence, the biblical comprehension of God's purpose for Israel must become political with following engagement. It is only through the political society that the ICEJ can succeed with the restoration plans. Before the third Christian Zionist congress in 1996, Jan Willelm van der Hoeven, stated that:

A Christian Zionist is someone who not only believes in a future for the people of Israel but is willing to be an active instrument to bring it about. In other words, the distinctive feature of

⁶⁰ The Jewish Agency spokesperson, Natan Sharansky, argued "To those who say that anti-Semitism in France is good for Zionism, I say they are wrong. For every 10 who experience anti-Semitism, nine will distance themselves from Jewish life, and only one will make Aliyah", which he stated to The Washington Post (2014)

Christian Zionism is not just the adherence to a certain eschatological position concerning the Jewish people, it is a serious commitment to see it come to pass (quoted in Widnes 2007, 100).

The Christian Zionists in the ICEJ, in other words, regard themselves as a necessary tool for the restoration of Israel. The active engagement in defending and supporting Israel in the public debate is why Sizer has placed the ICEJ in a category of political dispensationalism. By this, Sizer argues that the ICEJ has a more optimistic eschatology than other dispensationalist organizations, meaning the theology lacks the aspect where two-thirds of the Jews will die in the Armageddon, and the rest will convert to Christianity.⁶¹ Further, Sizer characterized the political dispensationalists as that they believe the purpose of the Church is to bless Israel, because of their comprehension of God's selection of the Jewish people as the redemptive tool (Sizer 2004a, 302-3).

After having seen, in this chapter, how the ICEJ understands the role of Israel, and the necessity for that the Jews live inside Israel in order to reach the next stage in God's providential plan, it becomes clearer how the ICEJ narrates itself into this plan, which thus allows for action as a benefactor for Israel. In the ICEJ's narrative, the world is at stake, and political action is needed in order to avoid the judgment of God on the nations. Israel needs blessings, support and comfort in order to survive, and the Jews need to be *brought home*.

⁶¹ This aspect is central for apocalyptic dispensationalists, which originates from popular authors Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye, the authors of *The Late Great Planet Earth* and the *Left Behind* saga.

5 Assisted migration: The key to Jewish homecoming

“Now when we look at some of the prophetic passages in Scripture about the great Ingathering of the Jewish people in the last days, we see that it is being fulfilled with great accuracy and detail”.

David Parsons, PR-director at the ICEJ (2014a).

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the ICEJ has systematically worked in order to help the Jews return to Israel. This strategy has consisted of finical and outreaching information of Aliyah towards Jews in the Diaspora. Since the beginning of its migration program, the ICEJ claims to have assisted over 115.000 Jews to Israel, from all over the world, with the cost of some USD 45 million.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how the ICEJ constructed a narrative that encouraged Christian Zionists to take executive action in the restoration of Israel. I will in this chapter, use the theoretical perspective of how the ICEJ conceives its role in restoring Israel by using Harding’s theory of how the apocalyptic language results in efforts to be a part of the fulfilment of prophesies. Inspired by this, I will examine how the ICEJ’s work is carried out by answering my second research question, *what strategies does the ICEJ employ in order to assist the Jews to Israel?* Furthermore, I will throughout the chapter, look at the effects the assistant migration work have on the preservation of the Jewish state, following my third research question: *what effects does the ICEJ have or might have on the preservation of the Jewish state?* I will here look at how the ICEJ is assisting Jews to Israel, and see how the ICEJ ensure that the Jews stays in Israel. I will also look at how the ICEJ sees the Jewish homecoming as biblical promises that are coming true today.

The ICEJ has in various ways assisted Jews from all over the world, and to go into depth of all of these cases would be too extensive for this thesis. I have therefore focused on two cases, which the ICEJ has given special attention to in its information service: the return of the Russian Jews and the return of Indian Jews from the Bnei Menashe tribe. I will use these two cases to go into detail of how the ICEJ uses its resources to assist them to Israel. I will however, begin the chapter with a brief overview of the history of Jewish Aliyah and the Law of Return (1950), to settle the framework within the ICEJ has to operate.

5.1 Jewish Aliyah and the Law of Return

Although the Holy Land has never been off limits nor “cleansed” of a Jewish population and Jewish migration to Palestine has occurred throughout history, one in general refers to the beginning of Aliyah with the streams of Jewish migration in the late nineteenth century. At this time, millions of Jews fled from persecutions and anti-Semitism in the European and Russian Diaspora to their *ancestral golden homeland*.

The word *aliyah* in itself mean ascension in Hebrew. In ancient Israel, aliyah referred to the celebration of the religious festivals when the Israelites travelled up to Jerusalem to participate in the festivities. Through history the word was also used to call up young boys to read from the Torah during mass in synagogues (Groth 2003, 218). In Jewish culture, it seems that the word always has been attributed a connotation of movement and traveling.

In the end of the nineteenth century, the word had become more or less exclusively synonymous with the specific action of immigrating to the Holy Land. Therefore, mass immigration from 1882 to 1939, when groups of Jews settled in Palestine, is today referred to as the *Waves of Aliyah*⁶². During this period, the term aliyah became associated with the Theodore Herzl’s Zionist-movement, and is now seen as an “ideological construction of homecoming” (Remennick 2010, 191). Two years after the establishment of Israel as a nation, the government passed the Law of Return to guarantee the principle of unrestricted Jewish immigration to Israel. The first article of the Law stated “every Jew⁶³ has the right to come to this country as an *oleh* [singular form of Jewish immigrant to the Land of Israel]” (Knesset 1950 (2003)). In 1970, however, the Law of Return, received an amendment that gave spouses, children and grandchildren of Jews the right to immigrate to Israel and automatically receive citizenship (Joppke 2009, 86). This meant that grandchildren of Jews and their kin is allowed Israeli citizenship, and therefore the Law of Return includes a rather large group of people who are eligible to make Aliyah to Israel.

However, the Law does not include those who claim descent from the lost tribes of Israel. Family ties are apparently more important than cultural and religious identity, and the Law has therefore by some been regarded as discriminatory against non-halacha Jews. This had direct complications for the ICEJ’s assisted migration work. In one case, in 2004, the ICEJ visited the Jewish community of Kaifeng in China, where these Jews uttered desire to migrate to Israel.

⁶² These waves were the following: First Aliyah: 1882-1903; Second Aliyah: 1904-1914; Third Aliyah: 1919-1923; Fourth Aliyah 1924-1929 and Fifth Aliyah: 1929-1939.

⁶³ Every Jew who is considered a Jew in accordance with halacha - the Jews’ religious law.

Israeli authorities did not recognize their eligibility because the Kaifeng-Jews only trace their Jewish ancestry through their paternal line, while maternal ancestry is required as proof (Schiavi 2004, 20). In the recent years, the Israeli authorities has made a loophole where non-halacha Jews can qualify for Aliyah by taking a three-day conversion course.

Evidently, the Law of Return is pragmatic and includes a large group of Jewish people. However, the Messianic Jews are not permitted to make Aliyah under the Law of Return, which is a quite essential group for Christian Zionists. In the previous chapter, I pointed out that Jews still needs to recognize Jesus as the Messiah in order to be saved, according to the ICEJ, and this is actually the case for the Messianic Jews. Messianic Judaism is seen as a syncretism between Christianity and Judaism, where the Jewish law is held, but in addition they believe that Yeshuah (Jesus) is the Messiah, thus making them spiritualized. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that the ICEJ believes that the Jews will return to Israel.⁶⁴ Howard Flowers stated:

Occasionally people comes to me and says: “Howard, why aren't you teaching these people the evangelical, why aren't you putting the Bible in their suit case? What happens if the airplane crashes and they won't get helped?” First of all I'm saying, we promised the Jewish agency that we wouldn't process this, and we gave our word in 1990, but this doesn't mean we can't pray for them, but the real reason is that it says in the Bible that God will bring them home, and then he will putt the spirit down [in them].⁶⁵

It seems that the absence of the ICEJ's proselytization towards Jews has also a pragmatic side, because most Jews do not like to be exposed to proselytism⁶⁶ and as a promise to the Jewish agency, but also that converted Jews would not be allowed to make Aliyah under the Law of Return. David Parsons made a notion of that the ICEJ does not get into who is eligible of making Aliyah and if messianic Jews desires this, there are law firms that can help them.⁶⁷

The Law of Return has also received critic from the international community because it provides privileges for halachic Jews, which thus imply that Israel is an exclusively Jewish state. Also, by using the word “return” in the title of the Law, frames that it is a “natural right for every Jew in the world to immigrate to Israel”, to use the words of Joppke and Rosenhek (2009, 78, see also Law of Return 1950 (2003)).

⁶⁴ This was not a new notion, as we saw in section 2.1, however this concept of “two returns” works to the ICEJ's benefit in assisting Jews to Israel.

⁶⁵ Lecture held by Howard Flower at the Feast of the Tabernacles, 24 September 2013.

⁶⁶ According to Jack Corcos, in interview held at the Jewish Agency headquarter, 9 October 2013.

⁶⁷ In interview made with David Parsons 9 October 2013 at ICEJ headquarters.

5.2 The Diaspora/homeland dichotomy

I have already mentioned above the two terms *homeland* and *diaspora*, and pointed out the use of the word *return* in the Law of Return. However, does it make sense of talking about a homeland and diaspora in a globalized world as we see today, and is it possible to talk about a *return* for a people when the return is to a country that was not their birth country, nor have had any relatives living there? How these three terms function in the ICEJ's narrative is important in order to understand when further discussing how the ICEJ defends the Jews' right to be in Israel in the public sphere, but also how it conceives the Jews living in the Diaspora in a globalized world where people can more or less freely move around.

In the previous chapter, we saw in section 4.2.1-2 how the ICEJ conceives Israel to be the Promised Land given to Abraham, with the Bible as the *deed of conveyance*, which has guaranteed the Jews to hold the land of Canaan for all eternity. Homeland can therefore be understood to refer to the mythological place where the ancestors of the Jews today once lived and the Jews were sent into exile (Stock 2010, 24-25). However, the modern state Israel is still closely linked up to this mythical land, because of the Abrahamic Covenant, thus the separation between the modern day Israel and the mythical nation in the Bible erased. The Jews must therefore return from the Diaspora and return to *their* Promised Land

While various scholars and academics use the term diaspora to describe dispersion and where collective identities that has been formed through time and space by power and politics, the ICEJ takes the diaspora term back to its more original meaning of a *messianic ingathering*. In one of the original Greek translations of the Bible, the Septuagint, diaspora was used for the first time and referred to a "divinely ordained dispersion of Jews from the Holy Land" embedded with an eschatological concept of a messianic restoration (Shneer 2010, 263). The exile is by the ICEJ regarded as God's punishment of the Jews because they misbehaved and therefore forced into Diaspora, but this is seen as a temporary condition, Howard Flower explained this as:

[W]hen you see what is happening in our generation, this is something God is doing. There is a redemptive purpose that leads to this, and we should be a part of that. In fact, when you look at the prophet Isaiah, he always left out the return because he knew that God would bring the Jews back one day, and even the Jewish Sages said that one day God would bring the Jews back to the promise. It is all in the prophecies. God could always expect the gentiles would be a part of this.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Interview 9 Oct. 2013 at the ICEJ HQ

Homeland and diaspora can therefore be seen as “(...) part[s] of a soteriological scheme”, to use the words of Baumann (2010). The Jews were sent in exile, and the Diaspora must therefore be seen as a punitive place. Now, on the other hand, God is letting the Jews return to Israel after He scattered them all over the world.

The notion of the Diaspora as a punitive place is still present in the ICEJ’s narrative. This can be seen when the ICEJ talks about the danger in the Diaspora. In an example from France where Howard Flower said:

But, in the coming years the Muslims came too from Northern Africa. So there are primarily ten Muslims for every Jewish person. After the intifada in the year 2000, the intifada moved to France, and those problems continued for ten years over, and cars were being burned, the schools being vandalized. There were areas in French cities where the police would not go without special back up, even the fire departments would not go because the angry youth would throw rocks at them, and stir up the situation. But they kept this way ‘cause the French visit law authorities meant they did not have any problem. They thought they could deal with it, but it didn’t get better. In 2007, [Nicolas] Sarkozy was elected president and people were hopeful that he might be some kind of figure to slow this down. Aliyah during this time in France was increasing dramatically, sharply; the Jewish Agency estimated that 40 % Aliyah increased this year, about 2500 people [coming to Israel].⁶⁹

This underscores the ICEJ narrative’s view of the Diaspora as a punitive and disciplinary place for the Jews. When Israel was established in 1948 this was a divine sign that the Jews were no longer forced to live in exile and were allowed to return home. There is thus no reason for Jews to remain in the Diaspora. However, for some reason, it seems as if Jews resist to make Aliyah until it is necessary. This latter remark can be seen in relation to the theological conception of hunters, who will chase the Jews out of the Diaspora (see chapter 4). In other words, here the ICEJ portrays it as a necessity for the evilness in the world to chase the Jews to Israel, while at the same time the ICEJ shows a clear profile of condemning the anti-Semitism (see next chapter on Islam). The ICEJ does not wait until the hunters will chase the Jews out from all over the Diaspora, but it has taken the role as the fishers who will “fish” for the Jews, as seen in Jeremiah 16:16.

⁶⁹ Cited from lecture conducted by Howard Flower at the Fest of the Tabernacles 24 Sept. 2013

5.3 A scope of the ICEJ's Aliyah work at a global scale

The aim for this chapter is to explore how the ICEJ works in order to assist Jews to Israel. As mentioned introductorily, the ICEJ started sponsoring Aliyah-flights in Russia 1991. Since then there has been an increasing interest in the service, and the organization has expanded the assisted migration to reach globally. Today (2014) it operates with eight Aliyah offices or agents. In St. Petersburg Howard Flower oversees the ICEJ's assisted migration work and in addition administrates assisted migration from Russia. In Siberia, local churches find potential Jewish immigrants, which is funded by the ICEJ and other Christian Zionist organizations such as the Ministry to Israel, the Ezra Foundation and the Bridges for Peace. In Central Asia, there is an office run by the Finnish ICEJ branch and the Ministry to Israel where they fund "fishing"⁷⁰ and equipment to the Jewish Agency office in Tashkent, in which concentrates on Jewish Aliyah from Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The ICEJ-office in Latvia concentrates on escorting immigrants from the Baltic countries and from Kaliningrad, as well as locates potential Jewish migrants. The Canadian ICEJ-branch funds for strengthening Russian-Canadian Jews absorption in Israel through the ICEJ-Aid, while the US-branch funds for the equivalent for the Russian American olim (Jewish immigrants in plural). The Norwegian ICEJ-branch has sponsored "fishing" in Germany targeting Russian speaking Jews, and there is also initiative by Erik Selle in the US where the target is Reform and Conservative Jews. In the recent years the ICEJ has also both expanded to France and South America, and has sponsored flights from Russia, Sweden, France and Finland (ICEJ 2014a). The ICEJ's migration work, as we can see, reaches mostly in the Western world and in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) states.

However, the ICEJ does not have a legal mandate from the Israeli authorities to complete the Jewish immigration. Its assisted migration service therefore goes through Israeli Zionist organizations with the mandate of helping Jewish immigration.

5.3.1 A Zionist alliance

All of the ICEJ assisted migration work goes through Israeli Aliyah organizations, which have the necessary mandate to receive migrants in Israel. These migration organizations also provide a more easy transfer for the Jewish migrants by organizing their flights and absorption to the Israeli society. By cooperating with these organizations, the ICEJ extends its outreach to the potential Jewish immigrants, since these Jewish organizations have a wider

⁷⁰ The ICEJ uses the word fishing when referring to locating potential Aliyah-candidates.

network where they cooperate directly with Jewish communities in the Diaspora. We saw above how the ICEJ contributes in finding Jews who desires to make Aliyah, but all the legal paperwork have to go through the Israeli immigration organizations. The ICEJ cooperates primarily with the Jewish Agency and the Shavei Israel. The most important collaborator is the Jewish Agency, which works with helping Jews that desires to make Aliyah in the Diaspora and help the olim to be absorbed in Israel.⁷¹

According to Jewish Agency spokesperson Jack Corcos, the Jewish immigration to Israel is particularly important in order to save the Jews as a people. Corcos pointed at four reasons of why it is important for the Jewish Zionists to migrate to Israel: In order to preserve the Jewish people and prevent interfaith marriage; more easy to uphold the Jewish traditions – one is automatically Jewish in Israel, demography – securing a Jewish majority of the Israeli population and finally, it is the place for the Jews.⁷² In other words, the Jewish Agency has a clear Zionist agenda, which it thus shares in common with the ICEJ. The common goal of the Jewish return to Israel seems to be sufficient for a cooperation between the Jewish Agency and the ICEJ. According to Corcos, there is no problem to cooperate with Christian Zionist organizations such as the ICEJ⁷³. However, Corcos noted that some Jews have problems with receiving financial aid from Christian organizations because they fear these organizations may attempt to convert them. It seems that many Jews share this notion, and that this is the main problem for the Christian organizations' conduct of assisting Jews to Israel. As seen in section 5.1, the ICEJ promised the Jewish Agency not to proselytise towards the Jews. Still, other Christian organizations conduct missionary work that exclusively targets Jews, which sustain a scepticism of the Jews, making it difficult for the ICEJ to reach out to all potential Jewish migrants. Corcos also noted that most Jews does not know about the cooperation with Christian organizations⁷⁴, and he emphasized that as long as those organizations want to help the Jews to make Aliyah, and not enforce their Christian belief on the Jews, it is a good cooperation.

⁷¹ The Jewish Agency is a worldwide Zionist organization, established by the World Zionist Organization in 1929. Until the establishment of a government in Israel, the Jewish Agency functioned as the leadership; however, the organization is today non-governmental and receives its funding by donations from Israeli donors and the Jewish Federation of North America (JFNA). (Information from the interview with Jewish Agency representative Jack Corcos, on 9 October 2013 at the Jewish Agency HQ).

⁷² Information retrieved from interview held at the Jewish Agency headquarter, 9 October 2013.

⁷³ Information retrieved from interview held at the Jewish Agency headquarter, 9 October 2013.

⁷⁴ For the ICEJ it is important to show the Jews it is behind their homecoming, however, there are many other Christian Zionist organizations who also contribute and sponsor the Jewish Agency, therefor not all Jews know Christian Zionists support them.

The ICEJ' eschatological conceptions do not seem to be a problem either. Corcos dismissed the issue by explaining:

We know the Christian Embassy and other Christian organizations help us to bring the Jews to Israel, we know what is behind it, OK? It is not a secret, but we think as long as those organizations want to help the Jews here, know this is not our way of thinking and the way of doing, we think it is a very good cooperation.⁷⁵

In other words, despite the fact that the Jewish organizations are aware of the eschatological motivations by Christian Zionist organizations, the Jewish organizations do not regard this as an obstacle for cooperation. The Jewish migration organizations seems less concerned about eschatological motivations as long as this does not have any impact on the Jews who receive the aid. The mutual understanding of Israel as the Jews' homeland with the political Zionist work that follows, is therefore sufficient for the Jewish Agency to receive Christian aid. This we can especially see in the second organization, the ICEJ collaborates with, the Shavei Israel, which specializes on bringing the lost tribes of Israel home.

In section 2.1, I noted that Christians in the sixteenth century claimed they had discovered the ten lost tribes of Israel. Many Zionist Jews believes the tribes have survived in Diaspora and the Zionist organization Shavei Israel (Israel Returns) specialized on reaching out to descendants of Jews to reconnect them with their Jewish roots. In particular, the organization reach out to the "lost" and "hidden" Jews in the Diaspora, where many are identified as the lost tribes" of Israel. Moreover, some Jewish groups are also remnants of Jewish migration throughout history, where Jewish practice has almost vanished. The organization's founder, Michael Freund, previous deputy of communication in the Prime Minister's office⁷⁶, began the work of returning these Jews to Israel after he received a letter from a group of North East Indian Jews, named the Bnei Menashe, who desired to immigrate to Israel. This group claimed ancestry to the Menashe Tribe of Israel. Since that time, the Shavei Israel has helped "lost" Jews from all over the world to make Aliyah to Israel (Shavei Israel 2011). The ICEJ takes part in Shavei Israel's work of helping the Bnei Menashe to make Aliyah, which will be further elaborated in section 5.4.2.

⁷⁵ Interview held at the Jewish Agency headquarter in Jerusalem, 9 October 2013.

⁷⁶ Under the Binyamin Netanyahu administration.

5.4 An assisted homecoming

In this section will analyse two cases where the ICEJ has assisted two very different groups of Jews. The two cases illustrate how the ICEJ uses its narrative to be actively engaged in Jewish homecoming. The first group is the Russian Jews who struggled to leave Russia during the Soviet Union. The ICEJ has been most active here in locating the Russian Jews, but also been participating in bringing them to Israel. The second group is the Bnei Menashe; a tribe of Indian Jews located Northeast of India who desired to make Aliyah, but faced difficulties both in India and in Israel for their lack of Jewishness. The two cases are not meant as a comparative study, but must be seen as two different approaches that the ICEJ is using to assist the Jews, and how the return of these two groups fits into the ICEJ's narrative.

5.4.1 Russian Jews – “Let my people go”!

Today, the Russian Jews are the majority of the Israel's Jewish population with approximately 21 percent. The three first Aliyah waves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century consisted primarily of Russian Jews fleeing from pogroms in the Russian Empire, most sought their fortune in America, but about 75.000 settled in the British Mandate Palestine. During the Communist reign, Jewish emigration was nearly impossible; the Jews were held behind the Iron Curtain (Gitelman 1998, 138). In dispensational thinking, the Soviet Union has been identified as the biblical figures Gog and Magog who were allied with Antichrist (Weber 2004, 204). How the ICEJ has identified Russia, except from, as a part of Babylon, is not clear. The liberation of the Russian Jews became the ICEJ's first target in 1991.

During the first International Christian Zionist Congress in 1985, the ICEJ appealed to the Soviet government that it should allow the approximately four hundred thousand Russian Jews, who had applied for exit visa, to leave the Soviet Union. The appeal ended with the phrase “Let my people go” - taken from Exodus 9:1 where God commanded Moses to confront the Pharaoh by telling him to “(...) ‘Let My people go, that they may serve Me’”. Widnes suggests that the ICEJ activated an ancient Israelite mythology by using these quotations from the Old Testament (2007, 110). The SU's refusal to let the Russian Jews leave the Soviet Union, can therefore be seen as a parallel to the Pharaoh's refusal to let Moses leave Egypt with the Israelites. According to Widnes, the use of this biblical slogan, was not only an appeal to the Soviet authorities, but also a call for the Jews in the Diaspora to wake up and make their Aliyah, because the Exodus plays a central role in the Jewish

narrative of their Diaspora-situation (2007, 110). However, the ICEJ does not regard the biblical stories as myths, therefore I will argue that the ICEJ's use of Bible passage Exodus 9:1 was used to underscore that the Jews would eventually be allowed to return to Israel. The Soviet Union would therefore not be able to stop them from returning, because this is something God is doing, as we heard both Parsons and Flower note.

The Role of the Finnish Christians

The role the Finnish Christians has played in the assisted migration work is an example of how the ICEJ understands its role as God's agents on earth, who will bring the Jews to Israel. In 1989, Finnish Christians mobilized to bring the Jews out of the SU. Four Christian Zionist organizations⁷⁷ started a cooperation, which resulted in the *Finnish Exodus Committee* (or *Neliapila* in Finnish), where Ulla Järvillehto, the director of the ICEJ's Finnish branch, played a central role. Since then, the organization has helped over 17,000 Russian Jews to make Aliyah. Today it represents more than 25,000 Finnish Christians (Flower 2011a). The Russian Jews had to go through Finland because there were no flights leaving for Israel in Russia due to Arab treats to the airline companies. The Russian Jews then had to leave through Finland by public transportation. The Exodus Committee sat up special buses to transport the Jews out of Russia. While waiting for the further transportation out of Finland, the Jews were gusted in Christian families where they spend three nights (Flower 2011a). The role of the Christians was directly seen in the relation to the Bible passage of Isaiah 49:22, "See, I will beckon to the Gentiles, I will lift up My banner to the peoples; they will carry your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their shoulders".

The idea of the ICEJ's sponsorship of Jewish Aliyah came from the Israeli ambassador to Finland, Asher Naim, at a meeting where representations from the ICEJ-branch in Finland and Germany were present. The ICEJ wanted to contribute to the Exodus from FSU, and thus began the first Aliyah flight, which was given the suitable name 'Ezekiel' after the Prophet Ezekiel, who comforted the Jews held in Babylonian captivity (Flower 2011b). In May 1990,⁷⁸ the first ICEJ-sponsored flight, landed at the Ben Gurion Airport, and the "crowd of joyful singing Christians waiting, many broke out in tears" when they saw the new immigrants stepping out of the airplane, and the word of the arrival of the new immigrants

⁷⁷ These organizations are: The ICEJ, Aliyah 50, Geshet Hajestsia and the Karmel Association.

⁷⁸ In total (with and without the ICEJ-aid) about 200,000 Jews left the FSU, and within the decade over half a million Jews had left. In comparison, there were 170,000 Jews in total who left under the Soviet regime. (Gitelman 1998, 138).

spread out to Christians worldwide, according to Flower (2011b). This *visibility* of the ICEJ could be understood as a tactic in order to show the Jews that it is Christians who are funding their Aliyah flight, in the hopes that this will result in a better relationship between Jews and Christians. Does the ICEJ have a hidden agenda in doing this? It seems the primary reason of why the ICEJ is concerned with showing the Jews that it is sponsoring flights is to show the Jews that Christians are supporting the Jewish cause. This is also in the ICEJ's objective one, to show concern for the Jewish people (see section 3.1.2).

The ICEJ sponsored 54 full airplanes, which was more than 15.000 Russian Jews migrating on the “wings of eagles”⁷⁹ (Flower 2011b). The ICEJ-branch in Finland took over the Jewish migration from the Jewish Agency in 2004, when it closed down the local office due to budget cuts. Therefore, the Exodus Committee took over the part as a migration agency for the Russian Jews, and these Jews were transported on chartered airplanes together with Christian pilgrims to Israel (Flower 2011a).

Net Fishing for Russian Jews

Howard Flower started the “net fishing” for Jews in Russia in 1991. In the net fishing, the ICEJ works directly to find Jews who want to migrate to Israel. It is also noticeable how the ICEJ uses the Bible passage of Jeremiah 16:16, where God will send out many fishers to fish for the Jews in order to bring them back to Israel, as seen in the previous chapter. This provides the ICEJ a further validation to its work in finding Jews in the Diaspora. Since then, Flower has been leading the ICEJ's Russian office in St. Petersburg. The “fishing” for Russian Jews was carried out by speaking to Jewish communities in St. Petersburg, advertisement on radio, TV and in newspapers. In order to extend its outreach, the “fishing-group” started using the phonebook where they could search up the names that phonetically sounded Jewish. According to Flower, they came up with a list of thirty thousand names (Flower 2011c). This was then brought to the Jewish Agency in St. Petersburg, which shortened the list to ten thousand names, and started phoning the Jewish families. According to Flower, twenty percent of the called up Jews were interested in making Aliyah, which Flower regarded as “amazing results” (Flower 2011c). This was a part of the nationwide information project “Let my people Know!” –playing at the biblical verse from Exodus 9:1 “Let my people go”.

⁷⁹ Clearly inspired by the Bible verse Isaiah 40:31 which says: “But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

In 1993, the ICEJ expanded the net fishing by targeting Russian Jews in Germany. After Soviet's collapse immigrated about 250,000 Russian Jews to Germany between 1991 and 2005 on Germany's invitation. According to the ICEJ, the net fishing was also successful here, where 2,600 Jewish families wanted to connect with the Jewish Agency (Flower 2011c).

At the same time, net fishing was tried on Russian Jews in America.⁸⁰ However, it was less successful there, and the ICEJ had to rearrange its strategy for targeting these Jews. The internet was thus chosen as a strategy where the ICEJ was able to reach out to American Jews in general by advertisement, which was also translated into Spanish and Russian.⁸¹ The Jews that does make Aliyah from America are usually of the orthodox denomination, which according to Parsons, are less than ten percent of Jewish population (of approximately 6 million). Most Christian Zionist groups share the issue of the lack of interest from American Jews to make Aliyah, however Parsons stated that they could only "hope more American Jews would make the decision, because it is here they belong, but it is their decision".⁸² In the meantime, it is a concern for the ICEJ that the Jewish identity in America is weakening. However, Parsons also noted that the ideological connection to Israel remains about steady. Parsons also noted that most of the orthodox Jews that comes from America make Aliyah through the net fishing, thus it seems that the ICEJ has some success in assisting American Jews to Israel.

5.4.2 The Bnei Menashe: "I will bring your descendants from the East"

The assistance of the migration of the Bnei Menashe falls into another category of the ICEJ's outreach in assisting Jews to Israel, because they are not halachic Jews, which has led to much controversies in their migration to Israel. By 2005, 1,200 from the Bnei Menashe community had made Aliyah through the Jewish migration organization Shavei Israel. When the Bnei Menashe community were allowed to resume Aliyah in 2013 by the Israeli authorities, the ICEJ began sponsoring the airline tickets, while the Shavei Israel coordinates the project. One assumes that there are approximately 7,000 of the Bnei Menashe community left in India, and according to the ICEJ, they are awaiting the possibility make Aliyah to Israel. In Israel, there are now approximately 2,200 of the Bnei Menashe community (Parsons 2013a). The ICEJ has taken a

⁸⁰ Why the ICEJ separates between fishing for Russian American Jews and other American Jews are not clear from the ICEJ's aliyah reports, but perhaps the Russian American Jews are more easy to target.

⁸¹ According to the ICEJ, Russian Jews started to migrate from North America to Israel more extensively after the 9-11 terror attack in 2001 (Flower 2011b). However, according to Israeli immigration statistics, the numbers of North American Jewish migrants have remained more or less stable with a slight increment in the last decades (Libary 2014).

⁸² Interview held at the ICEJ headquarter, 9 October 2013.

large interest in this return, which were one of the themes Howard Flower mentioned in his lecture during the Feast of the Tabernacles in 2013, where he emphasised that the Bnei Menashe are returning in multitude to Israel nowadays. Since the resuming of Aliyah of the Bnei Menashe, the ICEJ has assisted 700 of them (Parsons 2013a, 8, 2014a).

The story of the lost tribes tells that God banished ten Israelite tribes from Israel after they opposed Him by worshipping two golden calves in 1. Kings 12:28. According to Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, the banishment is the “original sin” of the ten tribes, - sin that will never leave them (Ben-Dor Benite 2009, 9). The banishment is set to have taken place around 722 BCE, when the Assyrian Empire conquered the Kingdom of Israel. Much of the population in the Northern Kingdom was then driven into exile, and there is no further mentioning of the abducted Israelites (Groth 2003, 41). The myth, further tells that the ten tribes were scattered to the four corners of the world. The return to Israel, where they will reunite with their fellow Jews, has been seen as a sign of the entrance to the Messianic Age (Lyman 1998, 7). In the case of the members of the Bnei Menashe tribe, the ICEJ regards their return as a clear evidence that the world is moving closer to redemption of Israel (Parsons 2013a, 7).

Christian missionaries first discovered the Bnei Menashe in the early twentieth century, who converted them into Christianity. They were then called Chin-Kuki-Mizo, but after the Jewish Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail tracked them at the end of the century, they took the name *Bnei Menashe*, which means “sons of Manasseh” – a biblical figure who in Joshua 14:4 was described as the son of Joseph and the tribe’s patriarch (Udren 2004).⁸³

The return of the Bnei Menashe to Israel would, according to the ICEJ, imply another biblical promise is coming true nowadays. In Isaiah 43:5, it says “Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your descendants from the east (...)”. The ICEJ interpreted the descendants as the lost tribes in India. We can therefore see how the ICEJ is able to employ the immigration of different ethnicities to fit into its narrative of the reestablishment of Israel in accordance with the Bible.

Recognition as Jews

The Rabbinate recognized the legitimacy for the Bnei Menashe to make Aliyah in 2005, but in 2007, this was terminated because Indian authorities objected to the Israeli teams that located

⁸³ The myth of the Bnei Menashe tribe tells, after their exile in 722 BC, they traveled from Iran, along the Silk Road to China, where they became a part of the community of Kaifeng Jews. However, they later travelled further south and settled in the Mizoram and Manipur states, which are Indian enclaves located between Myanmar and Bangladesh, where they are still located. It is said the Bnei Menashe continued to observe Jewish rituals and traditions, such as kosher laws, the Sabbath and celebrated Jewish festivals.

these tribes and converted the Bnei Menashe to be eligible Jews to make Aliyah in accordance with the Law of Return. The Jewish identity of the Bnei Menashe has therefore been questioned and debated in Israel.⁸⁴ However, the ICEJ does not concern itself with who are eligible Jews and are entitled to make Aliyah, this becomes clear when analysing what how the ICEJ speaks about the Bnei Menashe. The ICEJ refers here to the group as a people who *claims* descents from the Manasseh tribe.

The international Christian Embassy Jerusalem also was privileged to be involved in the return of this special group of Bnei Menashe by sponsoring their flights home to Israel. The Bnei Menashe (“Sons of Menashe”) is a people living in northeast India who claims descent from one of the ten “Lost Tribes” of Israel (Parsons 2013a, 6).

In other words, the ICEJ seemingly does not claim that the members of Bnei Menashe are truly descendant from the Manasseh tribe, but it seems that this is not a big issue, because the ICEJ does not get into who is an eligible Jew.⁸⁵ The conversion process the Bnei Menashe go through in order to regain their true Jewish identity, seems to be proof enough for the ICEJ’s willingness to help them make Aliyah. According to Parsons, Jewish eligibility to make Aliyah is not a concern for the ICEJ:

We don’t get into the question of who is a Jew, and who are entitled to Aliyah. We make same if you live way up in the mountains of Kazakhstan, and it is actually a two day bus ride or train ride to the Jewish Agency centres, and bring all your Jewish documentation, and that’s almost just as big of a trip as making Aliyah to Israel (...). [W]e would sponsor some of these visits for them to go prove they are Jewish, so our work with Aliyah has also been helping them getting their qualification with the Jewish Agency (...). We don’t get involved with those questions.⁸⁶

It seems here the ICEJ has taken a pragmatic solution to the difficult question of who is a Jew by letting the Jewish Agency decide the eligibility of them to make Aliyah. It seems therefore in the ICEJ’s narrative the question of who is a Jew is a secondary issue, as long as the Aliyah candidates themselves have a Jewish identity. In order to avoid diplomatic controversies with Indian authorities, the Jewish Agency has now organized for conversion of the Bnei Menashe members in Nepal, in order to avoid Indian laws against proselytization in India (Parsons 2013b).

⁸⁴ There were made DNA tests that showed that the Bnei Menashe could trace its genes to the Middle East, but the result was inconclusive (n.a. 2013).

⁸⁵ According to David Parsons in interview 9 October 2013 at the ICEJ headquarter.

⁸⁶ David Parsons, interview 9 October 2013 at the ICEJ headquarter.

The Bnei Menashe tribe becomes a central part of the ICEJ's narrative, where the return is seen as a divine sign in God's providential plan. This is underscored by another central element in the return prophesy: The Bnei Menashe are believed to be descendants from the tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, while most of the other Jews who have returned to Israel are considered as descendants from the southern kingdom of Judah. In biblical narrative, the two kingdoms were united under the King David, but following the succession of King Solomon in c. 926 BCE, the Israelite tribes started to have conflicting claims to the throne, which led to the division of the kingdom. In the ICEJ's narrative these two kingdoms are prophesied to be brought together according to Ezekiel 37:22: "[A]nd I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again". A peculiar remark in this notion was on one Aliyah flight, the Bnei Menashe came from India via Tashkent and by coincidence ended up on the same plane as Russian Jews who made Aliyah. This was thus interpreted that Judah and Israel is coming home as one nation. The ICEJ underscored this coincidence as an evidence of the fulfilment of biblical promises that are coming true nowadays. (Parsons 2013b, 6-7).

A political strategy?

There is also a political side that can explain the enthusiasm for bringing the Bnei Menashe to Israel: The Jews of the Bnei Menashe tribe who already reside in Israel have a reputation for being quality workers and patriotic citizens to Israel. According to Martha Kruger from the Migration Policy Institute, the tendency of the Bnei Menashe members to settle on Occupied territory has led some Israelis to see them as a political strength (Kruger 2005). Michael Freund from the Shavei Israel, also noted this aspect in the interview with Word from Jerusalem, where he summed up the benefits of having the Bnei Menashe in the Israel:

They are deeply Zionistic. They are people of faith. (...) They serve in the Israeli army. They defend the land. They are productive and committed members of Israeli society. They make this country a better place. Particularly now, when Israel is facing so much hostility and so many threats around the world, nothing would be more important than to help the Bnei Menashe come home to strengthen this nation (Parsons 2013b).

The ICEJ and Shavei Israel has found common ground in where a return of the Bnei Menashe tribe would strengthen the Israeli state and preserve its "Jewishness". The fact that the Bnei Menashe settles in the occupied territories makes a two-state solution more difficult. Therefore,

one can question this assisting of Indian Jews to Israel more a tactical move in order to strengthen Israel's claim to the Occupied Territories. In 2003, Shavei Israel settled a group of 80 Bnei Menashe immigrants in the West Bank settlement Shavei Shomron near the Palestinian city Nablus (Rabinowitz 2003). According to Michael Freund, the decision was made out of economical, not political reasons.⁸⁷ However, he directly stated: "Not only are the Bnei Menashe a potential weapon in the demographic conflict, but they have also ended up strengthening the settlements" (Rabinowitz 2003). In other words, it seems the Shavei Israel was using them to reinforce the Jewish possession on occupied land. The same year, the Minister of Interior, Avraham Poraz (from liberal Zionist party Shinui), opposed the migration of the Bnei Menashe and claimed the tribe had no Jewish ties. He argued the only reason for the interest in bringing the Bnei Menashe to Israel was to bolster "extremist settlements" in the West Bank, Gaza and in Hebron, where few other Israelis desire to live, and they wanted to escape from poverty in India (Cook 2010). Poraz thus halted the migration of the Bnei Menashe to Israel. However, the Shavei Israel and the Christian Friends of Israel started lobbying for a continued immigration (Cook 2010). For the ICEJ, supporting the migration of the Bnei Menashe tribe provides validity to its narrative, while at the same time ensuring an Israeli expansion, hence strengthening Israel's position to claim the West Bank.

5.4.3 Constructing meaning out of assistance

The two cases have demonstrated the ICEJ direct contribution in assisting Jews from the Diaspora by funding the Jewish Aliyah flights, but in the case of the Russian Jews the ICEJ takes a direct role in locating them. In doing this, the ICEJ conceives its role as taking a part in the fulfilment of biblical prophecies, and of saving the Jews from the dangerous Diaspora, as seen in the previous chapter. In the case of the Russian Jews, the Christians received as direct role as the gentiles, who in the Bible shall "carry the Jews on their shoulders" to Israel. The ICEJ has built its services on legitimization from the Bible. The ICEJ used phrases and terms from the Bible in order to emphasize the biblical the return of the Jews to Israel is happening as described in the Bible, in the same manner as the Jews returned from the first exile. For the ICEJ the biblical stories of Jews in captivity in the diaspora and their return are those stories seen coming true today. It can also be argued that the ICEJ in its effort to restore the Jews to Israel takes these biblical names into use, in the hope of an increased interest for

⁸⁷ The Bnei Menashe did not receive any financial support from the government.

the Jews to make Aliyah, because these biblical stories are central in most Jews identity. Hence the use of these stories can further encourage Jews to make Aliyah.

In the case of the Bnei Menashe, we see how the ICEJ has interpreted this Indian tribe into being a part of the *knowing history*, where the lost tribes of Israel one day would return to Israel. In this way, the Bnei Menashe is not just a convenient group of “enthusiastic Jews”, which can be used in the preservation of the Jewishness of Israel. The return of the Bnei Menashe becomes another evidence of God’s providential plan, where He is in the absolute control of the world. For the ICEJ, this becomes another way of knowing history, to use Harding’s words (1994, 60).

It is important for the ICEJ to show the Jews who is sponsoring their Aliyah, which can result in strengthening the relationship between Christian (Zionists) and all Jews, in line with the ICEJ’s objectives (see section 3.1.2). It would be interesting for a future research to see if any of these Jews remain in contact with evangelical Christians, or if some of them are more disposed to convert to messianic Judaism. If this is so, I will assume this is not well received by all in the Jewish community in Israel.

5.5 “Planting the Jews in their homeland”

A vital part of the assisted migration-work is the *planting* of the Jews in the Israeli society, as a strategy in order to make sure the olim becomes properly integrated. The ICEJ describes this as *planting*, which is taken from Amos 9:15: “‘I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them,’ Says the LORD your God”. The ICEJ thus employs strategies in order to support for a good integration of the Jewish immigrants in Israel, by funding various Israeli absorption programs, such as the Red Carpet and Katef le Katef⁸⁸, but also providing its own homeware program for elderly Jews from the former Soviet Union. Moreover, the ICEJ is also supporting Jews living in settlements at the West Bank. These settlements are considered illegal by the international community (Newman 2013, Sylte 2009). This can thus be understood as a tactic to ensure that the olim are integrated in the Israeli society, and are less likely to emigrate from Israel, where the latter is seen as problematic to the Jewish Agency. According to Jack Corcos, the main challenge by helping the Jews migrate to Israel was to making them stay: “To make Aliyah is very easy. From Europe it is 4-5 hour, from the US it is 12 hours. This is not the issue. The issue is to integrate to Israel; to stay in

⁸⁸ Meaning ‘shoulder-to-shoulder’, Katef le Katef recruits native Israeli families that functions as mentors for the new Israeli families by helping them to cope with Israeli bureaucracy, choose schools for the children or where they want to live, and other basic needs in the startup phase.

Israel is the issue, because it is very easy to go back”.⁸⁹ Most Zionist organizations, as well as the Israeli government, share this concern, but the concern seems primarily to encompass ideological issues for the Zionist organizations, which desires that the Diaspora Jews return to Israel. Nevertheless, in 2007, the Israeli authorities announced they would spend USD 5,3 million on a campaign in order to persuade the Israeli émigrés to return, and the Jewish People Policy Institute estimated the number of Israeli born who lives abroad to be between 500,000-600,000 people (Schwartz 2013, DellaPergola 2011, 152). The ICEJ, on the other hand, does not regard this as a big problem. David Parsons, for instance, said “I don’t know the figures of the Jewish Agency relying on. They [the Jews] struggle to go back, I think the Jewish population is growing (...), but due to all the terror, there have been more Jews who have moved away from Israel”.⁹⁰ According to Parsons, this is not something the ICEJ is working on. Emigration is a personal decision, and not seen as a permanent suffering for Israel, by the ICEJ.⁹¹ In the ICEJ’s narrative, the Jews will not become uprooted once more. Hence, we can understand this lack of concern for Jewish emigration as part of this narrative, where the Jews will not once more become uprooted. Thus, the ICEJ has some strategies that ensures the Jewish immigrants’ integration within the Israeli society, but no direct strategies are employed in order to prevent Jewish emigration

As seen in this chapter, the ICEJ is has employed a number of strategies in order to assist in Jewish immigration to Israel. Through collaboration with Israeli organizations, the ICEJ can participate in brining Jews to Israel. With a pragmatic approach, the ICEJ adapts the homecoming of different Jews to fit its narrative, where it regard the biblical promises to come true today; such as the homecoming of the lost tribes of Israel. This assisting in Jewish migration also touched upon some issues regarding contemporary the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where the ICEJ advocates Israeli right-wing politics in the public sphere, in order to secure the continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

The ICEJ has hitherto assisted more than 115,000 Jews to Israel, which is a significant number. With its collaboration partners, the ICEJ is able to target Jews from most part of the world. The effects of these homecomings are contributing to create a more “Jewish Israel”. This might contribute to more Jews wanting to come to Israel and reattach to their Jewish identity (JPPI 2014). On the other side, this also affects the Palestinian minority living in Israel.

⁸⁹ Interview held at the Jewish Agency headquarter in Jerusalem, 9 October 2013.

⁹⁰ Interview held at the ICEJ headquarter in Jerusalem, 9 October 2013.

⁹¹ David Parsons in interview held at the ICEJ headquarter in Jerusalem, 9 October 2013.

6 Fighting Israeli de-legitimization in the public sphere

“Israel is also a Jewish state in an age when both religion and nationalism are under assault, therefore her ‘Jewishness’ is being called racism”.

ICEJ USA Director Susan Michael
(2010)

According to the Israeli Zionist think tank, the Jewish People Policy Institute a continued interest for Jews to make Aliyah, depends on Israel’s existence as a Jewish state (JPPI 2014, 26-7). The continued existence of Israel as Jewish is a precondition for a continued immigration of Jews, who out of a number of reasons seek to migrate.⁹² In addition, the Israeli government fears an absence of a fundamental Jewish characteristic of the Jewish state would perhaps threaten the continued existence of the Jewish population residing within the Holy Land, and where would the Jews then turn to if they once again became nationless? The recognition of Israel as a *Jewish state* has proved to be a controversial and problematic topic in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process for the Palestinians living on the Occupied Territories and for the international community. In the ICEJ’s opinion, the critics raised from the international community and the Palestinians are just attempts to delegitimize the existence of Israel. Therefore, the ICEJ is engage within the public debate, where it advocates and supports Israel’s actions towards the Palestinians in the ongoing conflict.

The previous chapter elaborated how the ICEJ regard the Jewish return as part of biblical promises coming true. The Law of Return opens up privileges for Jews to migrate to Israel, hence critical voices has pointed at problematic sides for this return; how it affects the Palestinians who live in Israel and in the Occupied Territories. Therefore, defending and supporting Israel becomes particularly important in order to secure the Jewishness of the Israeli state. A central strategy of the ICEJ’s engagement in Israel has therefore been advocacy in the public sphere. The main object in this strategy is to defend and support Israel’s actions and reputation, as well as to influence policymakers on key issues raised by the international community. This has generally concerned about issues such as the equation of Zionism with racism; the accusation of Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians is an act of an apartheid system and Israel’s unwillingness to endorse a two state solution in addition to withdraw the Jewish settlements from the Occupied Territories. The ICEJ has therefore executed several campaigns in order to repel the criticism from the international society. In

⁹² Many Jews migrate to Israel due to an economic downtime in their host country and seek job opportunities in Israel. Nevertheless, for the Christian Zionists it becomes important that regardless of the Jews motive for immigrating to Israel, to defend the right for the Jewishness of Israel.

2010, the US-Director, Susan Michael, said one of the ICEJ's objectives was to fight "disinformation": "There is a saying that comes to my mind that sums it up well: pray as if it is all up to God, and work as though it is all up to you" (Michael 2010).

The ICEJ therefore takes active agency in order to battle the evilness in the world seeks Israel's destruction. The tension between good and evil in the world is particularly visible within the international community. For the purpose in this thesis, the international community is understood as the UN, the EU and other political forums where nations come together, in addition to national mass media. This chapter will therefore examine how the ICEJ is fighting the evilness, which God uses to discipline Israel, in the public sphere. It seems here that the primary threat to Israel is moral relativism in the international community, where also Islam can be located as a threat. In order for the ICEJ to combat the evilness in the international community, it has adopted secular language in order to gain religious neutrality, where it can receive resonance by policymakers and other bystanders who do not share the ICEJ's religious comprehension. The main theme for the chapter be how the ICEJ respond to the de-legitimization of Israel in the public sphere, what strategies it employs and the effects it has with these strategies. I will however start and end with how the ICEJ uses its networks and strategies in order to influence on policymakers and promote for changes in the international community's attitudes towards Israel.

6.1 Advocacy in the public sphere

Chapter 2, gave an introduction to the rise of Christian Zionism and accounted for the massive lobbyism and advocacy work the Christian Zionist activists, including the ICEJ, employ in order to influence and pressure policymakers of governments and international forums such as the UN and EU in their decision makings concerning Israel.

For any NGO (non-governmental organizations, religious or secular) it is important to reach the audience where they are. The NGOs therefore uses mainstream media to set the agenda of specific issues and push them to the surface. It is less important whether the mainstream media is traditional or a modern, alternative media, as long as a significant percentage of the targeted audience receives the news from the NGOs. For instance, blogs and podcasts, then this become the NGOs mainstream media (cited in Fenton 2007, 145-6).

As seen in section 3.2.1, the ICEJ has a quite large media coverage of the situation in Israel and use different medias to reach out to as many of the organizations followers as possible. From the ICEJ's perspective this is meant to provide a more "balanced" picture of

the situation in Israel than mainstream news coverage provide, which it often find biased and pro-Palestinian (Juliussen 2013b). In addition, the ICEJ launches petition campaigns from its website that are sent to policymakers, and it has mobilized extensively in spreading of Israel positivistic information by using various media sources, in order to gain supporters of its cause. The ICEJ is also represented through various international Christian Zionist lobbies such as CIPAC and ECI, in order to gain influence on policymakers in the international community.⁹³ ICEJ Director, Jürgen Bühler, explained why a secular language was needed when lobbying the EU: “They don’t care about the Bible, they don’t read it” (WFJ 2004, 27). In the international community, the ICEJ’s biblical arguments for defending Israel have not any validity in these forums, and it has to frame the arguments into a secular language. This is beneficial because using religious arguments often can be contentious in the public sphere, and therefore this is a strategy all religious NGOs use in a public setting (Braun-Poppelaars 2011, 3994).

6.2 The arguments against de-legitimization

As a strategy to advocate for Israel, the ICEJ has written many commentaries on what it claim is a de-legitimization of Israel by the international community. The de-legitimization covers claims and accusations such as the apartheid analogy (Israel acts like an apartheid state towards the Palestinians), Zionism is racism (the Law of Return and the displacement of the Palestinians are racist acts), Israel’s unwillingness to support a two-state solution and Israel’s extensive use of violence towards the Palestinians. I will here look on some particular cases where these claims were raised by the international society and examine how the ICEJ responded to those claims. Also, the threat the ICEJ believes Iran exposes to Israel will be analysed here. I have also explained in details some of the central events and aspects in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a more “neutral” stance, in order to gain perspective on the ICEJ’s stance in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

6.2.1 The apartheid analogy

One event that through the years has caused reactions from the ICEJ was the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, 200 (Durban I), and it is therefore helpful to analyse the arguments the ICEJ specifically used here to denounce this analogy as

⁹³ Christian’ Israel Public Action Campaign and

an example of how the ICEJ fights the de-legitimization. The struggle began a few months before the launching of Durban I. The Pretoria newspaper published a letter, written by two South African Jewish anti-apartheid activists, who had raised several hundred signatures from prominent Jewish leaders, who demanded an immediate end to Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, in which they compared to South Africa's apartheid regime (Urbina 2002, 58).⁹⁴ Ignited by the letter, the apartheid analogy became a hot topic in the parallel NGO conference⁹⁵, which resulted in three articles in the declaration statements:

Article 164 states: targeted victims of Israel's brand of apartheid and ethnic cleansing methods have been in particular children, women and refugees. *Article 425 announces:* a policy of complete and total isolation of Israel as an apartheid state...the imposition of mandatory and comprehensive sanctions and embargoes, the full cessation of all links (diplomatic, economic, social, aid, military cooperation and training) between all states and Israel. *Furthermore, Article 426 talks of:* condemnation of those states who are supporting, aiding and abetting the Israeli apartheid state and its perpetration of racist crimes against humanity including ethnic cleansing, acts of genocide (Quoted in NGO-Monitor 2001).

Put short, the NGOs at the Durban-conference claimed Israel is running an apartheid regime towards the Palestinians. The NGO-declaration was seen as an offence to Israel and several prominent NGOs refused to sign the declaration, and it was refused to be represented by the UN-Conference Secretary-General (Schechter 2005, 180).⁹⁶

The accusation of apartheid comes from the problems caused by the barrier fence in Israel that splits the Israeli and Palestinian territories in two. The fence has its origin in the first Intifada (1987-93). In the wake of the Intifada, the Israeli government began securing the Green Line, in order to control the Palestinian flow into Israeli territories, out of security reasons, to prevent rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip and suicide bombers from the West Bank (Newman 2013, 137, 140). The Green Line refers to the separation of Israel and the West Bank, which was drawn as an armistice line after the War of Independence in 1948-9, when Jordan took control of the West Bank. The Green Line was kept after the Six Day War in 1967, despite of Israel's efforts to tone it down and remove it from maps. In a potential two state solution, the Palestinians wish to return to the "borders of '67" – the Green Line (Newman 2013, 136).

⁹⁴ The apartheid accusations were not new: In the late 1980s, the Israeli anthropologist Uri Davis published *Israel: An Apartheid Stat*, which caused quite a stir (Urbina 2002, 58).

⁹⁵ The NGO forum was a separate initiative where some 7000 NGO representatives were gathered (Schechter 2005).

⁹⁶ Among the NGOs that walked out was Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Lawyers' Committee of Human Rights (Schechter 2005, 180).

Between 2000 and 2005, another intifada led to the culmination of the separation barrier in 2004. The result was a severely limitation of movement for the Palestinians, and it cut off their access to East-Jerusalem. All Palestinians therefore need a special permit in order for them to cross into Israeli territory, while Israelis do not need such permission to cross into the West Bank.⁹⁷ Israel built the security fence almost exclusively along the Green Line; however, it circumvented these Jewish settlements, which were under construction on Palestinian side, in order to include the settlements on Israeli side. In the following years, the border was reinforced and resulted in what became known as the separation barrier from 2004 (Newman 2013, 137, see also Attachment Figure 3). The Palestinians condemned the building of the separation fence, which cut off them from their land and work, and forced them to spend several hours for clearance at the checkpoints. The UN has heavily criticized Israel for preventing Palestinians access to their own territory, claiming this is against international law (UN 2011, Dumper 2013, 128).

According to Malcolm Hedding, the goal of the accusations, where Israel was presented as an apartheid state, was to “discriminate against Israel, delegitimize Israel, and in the end, call for the dismantling of Israel” (Hedding 2014). In an interview with the Israeli newspaper, *Jerusalem Post* (published on the ICEJ’s website), Malcolm Hedding argued the apartheid analogy was nonsense and the barrier fence had nothing to do with apartheid but was exclusively used as self-defences (Gilbert 2007). The barrier fence was not built before *after* the second intifada, and the fence was built as a precaution after several Israelis were killed on the motor highways. This action could therefore not be equal to the dehumanization of a minority as in South African apartheid, according to Hedding (Gilbert 2007). Israel’s segregation people is done out of security concerns, not because of ideological superiority, these two cases can therefore not equated, and therefore the ICEJ does not hold any ethical dilemmas in defending Israel’s separation barrier.

Because the separation barrier was built out of security reasons, Malcolm Hedding claims the situation under the apartheid regime in South Africa and the contemporary separation between Israelis and Palestinians are “totally different” (Gilbert 2007). According David Newman, however, the wall has “transformed into an international border”, in the

⁹⁷ Even though entering Area A is illegal for Israeli citizens. The West Bank is divided into areas, classified by the extent of Israeli control. Area A is under the Palestinian Authority’s (PA) full control, however the IDF can engage under security concerns; Area B is under Israeli security control, but Israeli citizens are advised against entrance; Area C is under full Israeli civil and security control. The division was intended as a temporary solution in the second Oslo Accord, but remains operative (Golan 2013, 93)

meantime, the Jewish settlements further expand into the Palestinian territory, thus making a two state solution more difficult (Newman 2013, 140-1).

Hedding further claimed Israel is a democratic country with equal rights for minorities: “Jews, Christians, Arabs, Druze, Armenians and many other minority groups”, under Israeli law. Israel is seen as the only democratic nation in the Middle East with free press, right to peaceful demonstrations, gender equality, which is in stark contrast to the surrounding Arab nations, according to Hedding (2009). In other words, Israel here becomes a beacon in a troubled Middle East.

This argument can further be seen in the ICEJ reactions against the global Israeli Apartheid Week in 2010. The ICEJ's US-Director, Susan Michael, made a speech⁹⁸ at the Israeli Embassy in Washington DC, where she claimed the Israeli Apartheid Week was nothing but a campaign to delegitimize Israel and questioned why nobody was demonstrating against Hamas' 8,000 rocket attacks towards Israeli civilians and for murdering Christians in Gaza. She further denounced the international society's lack of respond to “Palestinian Authority for glorifying suicide bombers and brainwashing little children to want to become one” and the Iranian nuclear threat. She exemplified this with the selection of Iran to a four years of seat in the UN Women's Right Commotion, while “Iran does not recognize the basic human rights of women!” (Michael 2010). The ICEJ thereby communicates Israel as a modern democracy, has its fullest right to take the excessive step of building a separation wall and preventing Palestinians from Israeli territory. According to Malcolm Hedding, this will continue because “[i]t is a conflict for survival until Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran and their fellow travellers in the Middle East come fully to terms with Israel's existence [until this] the suffering of the Palestinians will continue”. The suffering of the Palestinians is not caused by Israel, but is a result of the Palestinians poor leadership (Hedding 2009). In this argumentation, we see how the ICEJ uses a secular language in order to explain the Middle East conflict. From the religious perception, world evilness seeks the destruction of the Jewish state, but in a secular translation tells of a fractional Islamic refusal to recognize the Jewish state.

The ICEJ's reactions to the apartheid analogy was seen by the ICEJ to be a part of a “Palestinian machinery”, which Malcolm Hedding expressed (2014). I did not find remarks by the ICEJ on the Jews that had started the apartheid analogy, nor to the letter in the Pretoria

⁹⁸ The speech was transcribed and published at the ICEJ's website under campaign against de-legitimization of Israel.

newspaper that started the stir. This aspect can be understood within the ICEJ's narrative as the Jews in the Diaspora are diluted and will return to Israel in dilution (see 4.2.3). However, for the Jews residing in the Diaspora, who does not wish to migrate to Israel because of its treatment of the Palestinians, these accusations could pose a problem for the ICEJ. The ICEJ has not made any statement regarding this issue, but perhaps the hunters will chase these Jews out of the Diaspora.

6.2.2 The equation of Zionism and racism

At the Durban review conference in 2009 (Durban II), the ex-Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad made a long speech where he claimed Zionism "was totally racist". The reception of the speech was ambivalent. Security guards had to escort student protesters, dressed up as clowns for the occasion of Ahmadinejad's speech, out of the conference room, while other UN-delegates walked out in protest. Others on the other hand applauded the outspoken president when he claimed that the Western Powers had out of their own interests established the state of Israel instead of dealing with the anti-Semitism and the Jewish refugees (Hammond 2009b).

Following World War II, they (the Western Powers) resorted to military aggression to make an entire nation homeless on the pretext of Jewish sufferings. And they sent migrants from Europe, the United States, and other parts of the world in order to establish a totally racist government in the occupied Palestine... And in fact in compensation for the dire consequences of racism in Europe, they helped bring to power the most cruel and repressive, racist regime in Palestine (Quoted in Hammond 2009b).

Ahmadinejad claimed the Western Powers had, instead of dealing with their own racism and discrimination, sent the Jews to live in Palestine as a solution, which consequently resulted in a creation of a "racist regime" that led to the displacement of Palestinians after the 1948 war.

Ahmadinejad's reference to the displacement of the Palestinians after the establishment of Israel, has its origin in what in the Palestinian narrative refers to as the al-Nakba (Catastrophe), where between 550.000 and 800.000 Palestinians became refugees in the Arab world (Schulze 2013, 45). The equation of Zionism and racism has also been made by the UN, which in 1975 adopted Resolution 3379 stated (the equation of Zionism and racism has been bolded out):

Recalling also that, in its resolution 3151 G (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973, the General Assembly condemned, inter alia, the unholy alliance between South African racism and **Zionism**. (...) Taking note of the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace (...) [1975], which promulgated the principle that "international co-operation and peace require the achievement of national liberation and independence, the elimination of colonialism and neo-colonialism, foreign occupation, **zionism**, apartheid and racial discrimination in all its forms, as well as the recognition of the dignity of peoples and their right to self-determination", (...). Taking note also of the Political Declaration and Strategy to Strengthen International Peace and Security and to Intensify Solidarity and Mutual Assistance among Non-Aligned Countries, (...), which most severely condemned **zionism** as a threat to world peace and security and called upon all countries to oppose this racist and imperialist ideology, *Determines* that **zionism** is a form of **racism** and **racial discrimination** (UN 1975).

The UN resolution resulted in massive critic from Israel and the pro-Israeli network, and in 1991, the resolution was revoked, as a condition for Israel's participation in the Madrid Peace Conference (MFA 1991).

The Jewishness of Israel has become a precarious issue in the peace-talks between Israel and Palestine. In the past decade, Israel has several times demanded the Palestinian Authorities (PA) to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, in which has been perceived by the Palestinians as a demand of "legalizing racism", according to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) official, Hanan Ashrawi (Cook 2014). The ICEJ, on the other hand, argues the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state is core, for securing a future existence of Israel. The revoke of the resolution did not end the usage of the equation of racism and Zionism, and the ICEJ has therefore advocated for the Israeli cause, especially against Ahmadinejad.

The ICEJ responded to the Ahmadinejad's speech at the Durban II, by calling it anti-Semitic; the Zionist movement was a response to the persecutions and anti-Semitism in Europe with the aim and attempt of creating a safe homeland for the Jewish people. Now on the other hand, with modernization and globalization, nationalism has become passé, thus the ICEJ US-Director Susan Michael concluded "Jewishness' is being called racism" (2010). There is "no longer a right or wrong, good or evil, truth or falsehood – it is all a question of competing narratives" (Michael 2010).⁹⁹

⁹⁹ The term "Competing narratives" gives associations to post-modern thoughts where this statement can either be interpreted as Michael regard the ICEJ's narrative as one of many equally true narratives. Alternatively, she believes her narrative is the absolute truth, but has realized the truth is of no value in the public sphere, because others do not conceive it as true. Assumably the latter is most likely, bases on the ICEJ's conception of the Bible's infallibility.

Susan Michael further claimed the accusations of Zionism being racism is a result of a diluted world, and this is done in order to delegitimize Israel. Here the enemies of Israel have found a “politically correct manner in which to defeat Israel and see the state dismantled”, but this must be understood as anti-Semitism because it is still classical anti-Semitism where the Jews are being blamed “for the world’s ills” (Michael 2010). This statement supports the assumption Michael holds a narrative where the truth is absolute. The evilness has diluted the world into believing there are other versions of the truth, but here Israel is portrayed as the truth-bearing beacon against the false-speaking world, which intends to destroy Israel (see also section 4.2.4). By dividing the world in good and evil, Susan Michael, claims the world has morally disintegrated. Moral relativism – the reluctance against recognizing a national state to be reserved for one people (the Jewish state) – becomes a part of the ICEJ’s enemy picture. The ICEJ thus seemingly equates Zionism with Judaism and anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. There are no distinction between these terms, hence criticising the ideological aspects of Zionism become nearly impossible.

Then there is the problem of the Palestinian population living in the Promised Land, who demands their own Palestinian state on the land that God gave to Abraham. For the ICEJ there is no option to establish such Palestinian state. The Palestinians demand to have their own state is supported by a large part of the international community, hence there is a possibility this solution one day will become reality – not a desired outcome for the ICEJ.

6.2.3 Arguments against a Two State solution

The European Friends of Israel (EFI), a Brussel-based organization consisting of Israeli friendly European parliamentarians, arranged in 2008 a Policy Conference, where many European parliamentarians, former prime ministers and presidents attended, in addition to the ICEJ as the only NGO. In this conference the ICEJ, represented by Malcolm Hedding and Jürgen Bühler, had the possibility to promote their organization and to share their opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hedding and Bühler focused here on the topics of radical Islam and the refugee problem (Parsons 2009, 4).

Malcolm Hedding stressed the issue of radical Islam where he claimed Yasser Arafat¹⁰⁰ had held a “belligerent speech (...) a few months after he had signed the Oslo Accords with Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn” where the late PLO-

¹⁰⁰ Arafat was here seen as a radical Islamist leader. It seems that the ICEJ here does not make any distinctions between Islam and Islamism. Arafat has also been identified as an antichrist (Widnes 2007, 88).

leader had stated “piece by piece, we will destroy Israel with peace” (Parsons 2009). The ICEJ still argues the Palestinians are under poor leadership by radical Islamists and is concerned about the threat from Hamas in Gaza.

One of the key issues when the ICEJ argued against the PA’s attempt for recognition in the UN, 2011, was the collaboration between Fatah and Hamas. According to Malcolm Hedding the latter group confesses a “radical Islamic theology and its desire to return to Dar al-Islam [House of Islam] (...), and “groups like Hamas riding on very clear Islamic theological principles”. Further, Hedding claimed Islam is imperialistic and desires to embed Israel in an Islamic Caliphate (Gilbert 2007).

The refugee problem that Jürgen Bühler referred to in the conference is also still present today; the persisting granting of refugee status of the successive generation of Palestinians living in refugee camps outside of Israel implies there are over 4 million people who now demand the right to return. This would according to Bühler, eliminate the Jewish state “by demographic implosion!” (Parsons 2009).

The Palestinian recognition as non-member state in the UN

In 2012, Palestine was granted the status as a non-member observer state in the United Nations, a decision the ICEJ denounced. The Palestinian Authorities (PA) had in the year before attempted to gain recognition as a state by the UN, with the pre-1967 borders and East Jerusalem as capital city. Such recognition would require approval from the UN Security Council and two-thirds majority by the General Assembly, an approval the United States likely would veto. The PA president Mahmoud Abbas therefore went around the UN Security Council by seeking recognition for the Palestinian state by the UN General Assembly without a full UN-membership in 2012 (UN 2012).

While the ICEJ believes it is the will of God whether there will be a two-state solution, as I mentioned in section 4.2.4, the ICEJ strongly advises against splitting the Holy Land into two national states (IKAJ). The ICEJ therefore made an official statement immediately after the recognition, where it claimed the UN General Assembly by this decision was “rewarding the Palestinians for their obstinate refusal to engage in direct bilateral negotiations with Israel, and thereby setting back the search for peace” (Parsons 2012). This case is interesting because with the UN recognition Palestine came one step closer to statehood; a scenario the ICEJ fears will undermine Israel as a Jewish state. I will therefore use some space to analyse the ICEJ argumentation against a potential full Palestinian statehood.

With Abbas' application for recognition in 2011, the ICEJ made an issue brief with a unilateral declaration against a Palestinian statehood. In the issue brief, the ICEJ claimed it knew the true intention of the Palestinians and predicting the consequences such statehood would have on Israel. The issue brief started with a background for the PA to take a step into the UN, where the ICEJ stated the Palestinians had abandoned Israel's peace efforts and began a diplomatic warfare against Israel in the UN (Michael 2011). In the issue brief, the ICEJ wrote the Palestinians goals were to strengthen their negotiating position in future peace talks; to implicitly give Israel the blame for previous failed statehood attempts, where the Arabs have rejected statehood in the past 80 years; to further delegitimize and demonize Israel; to circumvent the need of recognizing Israel as a Jewish state and to make it easier to pursue claims against Israel in various Human Rights forums (Michael 2011). The brief was issued in a secular language within a political frame, thus biblical argumentation was left out of the brief. I will however, draw some lines to the ICEJ's biblical view when I analyse the brief in order to discuss how biblical comprehension influences *realpolitik* in the conflict.

What seems to be the issue for the ICEJ in this argumentation is how Israel would be portrayed internationally if Palestine would be recognized on its own premises. With statehood, Palestine could potentially have an amplified position and could bring Israel for human right courts. This would potentially be a problem that could weakened Israel as a Jewish state if for instance Israel would be convicted for discriminatory actions towards Palestinians with Israeli statehood.

Besides setting Israel in a bad light, the ICEJ further wrote in the issue brief the PA sought a statehood based on the 1967 borders with no recognition for the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, which would imply displacement of the Israeli living there. East Jerusalem was also desired as a capital in Abbas' proposal for statehood. The ICEJ claimed such recognition would lead to the holy sites of Judaism and Christianity fall into "control of a hostile Islamic entity" (Michael 2011). However, the ICEJ noted the alternative of returning to the UN Partition plans in 1947 where Jerusalem would be placed under international control.¹⁰¹ The last objection was on the return of the four million Palestinian refugees who, would likely seek the right to return to their homes inside of Israel. In the ICEJ's narrative, any loss of land is highly undesirable, especially if Israel would lose East Jerusalem. A unified Jerusalem is central for the ICEJ – the reason why the ICEJ was established in 1980 –

¹⁰¹ The ICEJ did not make any stance upon if it would agree to such a solution, but most likely, it would object this because only Israel should possess Jerusalem.

hence dividing Jerusalem would be problematic. As seen in section 4.2.3, the ICEJ believes the Second Coming will happen on the Mount of Olives, located in East Jerusalem, which would be impossible if this part becomes the capital of a Palestinian state.

With the return of the Palestinian refugees and the displacement of the Jews in the Occupied Territories, would lead to a demographical unbalance causing the “Jewishness” of Israel to be at stake. As I explained in section 4.2.3, the ICEJ believes the privilege for the Jews to live in Israel depends on their faithfulness with God. A potential loss of land would therefore be regarded as punishment from God. However, of theological reasons, the ICEJ is obligated to support Israel regardless of Israeli political development in the Jewish state, which makes it important for the ICEJ to encourage and support Israel with the word of God (IKAJ). It is therefore important for the ICEJ to be active fighters in order to ensure Israel’s continued existence as a Jewish state, even though divine corrections can strike Israel, and therefore Israel could potentially lose land.

The next part of the issue brief discussed the implication the Palestinians would face as an independent state. The main implication, according to the ICEJ was the “possible decrease of international funding from the US and European Union in addition of losing large UN subsidies for the vast segments of the Palestinian ‘refugee’ population in Gaza”(Michael 2011).¹⁰² A Palestinian statehood would undermine financial support from the international society, and cuts could lead to increased level of unrest in the Palestinian regions (Michael 2011). This could be understood as the ICEJ claims it is within the Palestinians own interest to be under Israeli control. Furthermore, the ICEJ argued the independence could lead to increased tensions between the different political fractions in Palestine. According to the ICEJ, Hamas will not recognize Abbas as president of a united Palestine, and secondly, the ICEJ claims Abbas lacks democratic credibility.¹⁰³ Lastly the ICEJ believes Hamas will never “accept any Palestinian statehood that does not involve the eradication of the existing State of Israel” (Michael 2011). The ICEJ thinks a potential Palestinian state falls on its own premises, resulting in a destabilization of whatever structure Palestine may hold, leading to a turmoil and unrest in the region.

¹⁰² Although it seems unlikely that the international society would exterminate financial support just because Palestine would receive, become a sovereign state, while many other developing countries (and also Israel), are recipients of aid funding.

¹⁰³ The argument here was because Abbas never meets in the Palestinian General Assembly In which Abbas is accountable too, and in addition he has suspended elections and has extended his own term, according to the ICEJ (Michael 2011)

The ICEJ does not find any basis for supporting a Palestinian nationalism (IKAJ). In fact, the ICEJ denies there has ever existed a Palestinian state or nation throughout history, and therefore the Palestinians have no historical attachment to the area (Juliussen 2013a). The argumentation here is the Palestinian area has always been under foreign rulers, from the time when the Roman Empire named the area Palestine. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, the region has been under various foreign rulers. In 1922 the League of Nations formally approved British control over mandatory Palestine at the San Remo Conference in Italy, based on the British intentions for a future homeland for the Jewish people in the region, which was stated in the Balfour Declaration (Juliussen 2013a, see also Lutes 2013, 367, and section 2.3).

According to the ICEJ, there are neither any secular arguments that support a Palestinian state. Because the British Mandate intended the area to become a Jewish homeland, Palestinians have no legal right to the same territory. However, the Palestinians and the surrounding Arab nations were not of the same opinion, and with the establishment of Israel in 1948, war broke out, where Jordan took control of the West Bank –an intended area for the Jewish homeland. The ICEJ claim, this was an illegal occupation lasting 19 years until the Six Day War in 1967, and therefore the area cannot be subject to an illegal occupation by Israel when it fell back to Israel (Juliussen 2013a). Former Norwegian director, Leif Wellerop, has also stated the Palestinians have their own state in Jordan, and therefore they could move there if they want to live in a Palestinian state.¹⁰⁴

In the previous chapter, I noted the ICEJ provides financial support to individuals in the Jewish settlements on the West Bank, a gesture, which is less appreciated by the international society. The Jewish settlements on the West Bank dates back to the Six-Day war in 1967 when, Israel occupied the West Bank (including East-Jerusalem), the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza strip and the Golan Heights. With the “liberation” of East-Jerusalem and the West Bank, the Israelis received access to important religious sites, and build settlements in Gaza and on the West Bank (Lutes 2013). When the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 242 the same year, demanding Israel to withdraw and return the territory to the Arab world,¹⁰⁵ Israel claimed this only applied to the armed forces, while not the Jewish settlements, while the Palestinians demand the complete Israeli withdrawal.¹⁰⁶ In the ICEJ’s arguments, however, it is clear the Jews have the

¹⁰⁴ Interview with former Norwegian ICEJ-Director Leif Wellerop on 1 March 2013 at the Oslo Symposium Conference 2013.

¹⁰⁵ In return to the Arabs would recognize Israel’s existence and its sovereignty (Lutes 2013, 370).

¹⁰⁶ The UN Resolution 242 states: “(i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict. (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the

full entitlement to live in the Occupied Territories. The argumentation is rooted in the intention of the Balfour declaration, which stated the British government would participate in a restoration of a “national home for the Jewish people” (Balfour 2013).

The ICEJ therefore does not take the Palestinian narrative into account, which claims Palestinian inhabitants predates Israelite presence in the land, and thus have deep historical roots and connection to the area (Scham 2013). In addition, the Palestinian narrative considers the British Mandate of Palestine as an illegal establishment, claiming the Balfour declaration was an imperial strategy with no right in international law. When the League of Nations ratified Mandatory Palestine, this was done on illegal premises, stating “he who did not own gave a promise to those who did not deserve”, clearly referring to Britain, which did not take concern of the people already living in the land (Scham 2013, 33-4). As seen above, the ICEJ refute this narrative by claiming it was in the Western Superpowers right to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine without considering the Palestinian population, because they have a Palestinian state in Jordan. Nevertheless, it seems the conclusive argument is based on the theological comprehension where God gave the land to the Jews (see section 4.2.1).

In these cases, we have seen how the ICEJ has been forced to use secular language in order to defend Israel in the public sphere. However, it is noticeable it also attempts to turn the discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a theological discourse. This aspect more explicit in the ICEJ’s arguments against Iran.

6.2.4 The threat from Iran

In 2008, the ICEJ delivered a petition to UN General-Secretary Ban Ki-Moon, with signatures from over 55,000 Christians from 120 nations, demanding the Iranian President should be “indicted for incitement to genocide against Israel” (Parsons 2008).

The ICEJ has long advocated against Iran, especially during President Ahmadinejad’s reign (2005-13). The outspoken president had on several occasions threatened to “wipe Israel off the map”, denied Holocaust¹⁰⁷, and equated Zionism with racism (Freedman 2013, 331).

According to the ICEJ it was the extensive use of inflammatory language, where the ex-President called e.g. the Jews “cancerous tumours that need to be removed” (Hedding 2008). In Hedding’s letter to Ban Ki-Moon, the ICEJ expressed sincerely concern for a nuclear attack from Iran. The

sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force” (1967).

¹⁰⁷ It is disputed whether Ahmadinejad actually denied Holocaust, or if he just questioned why Palestinians should pay for this by giving up land for a Jewish state (Hammond 2009a).

ICEJ argued Ahmadinejad saw himself as a key element for the return of the 12th Imam, Madhi¹⁰⁸.

Thrown into this dangerous mix is the fact that Mr. Ahmadinejad appears to have developed a mystifying self-awareness that he is to play a key role in the advent of the Madhi expected by many devout Shia Muslims. In his last address before the UN General Assembly, he even insists that an “aura of light” engulfed him as he prayed for the coming of this mythical figure (Hedding 2008).

Based on this statement, Hedding warns about a religious hidden agenda of the Iranian president. The return of the 12th Imam is expected to happen in a world in turmoil. There will be plagues, earthquakes and wars, are just some examples of what will happen in the advent of the return (Vogt 2005, 203). The ICEJ therefore fears Iran will resort to nuclear bombing of Israel in the hope of hasten the return. The ICEJ’s own conception of the return of Jesus, which happen in similar terms, is not shed any thoughts. Another remark is the ICEJ’s use of religious conception to blacken Iran. In other words, the ICEJ here claim that because Ahmadinejad has taken a role in the coming of the 12th Imam, it demands him to be sanctioned. We see here clearly the fundamentalist aspect of the ICEJ’s narrative, where it claims to hold the absolute truth, while others with similar expectations in other religions are dismissed as being evil and seekers of Israel’s destruction. The ICEJ’s focus upon Islamic End-Time theology can be seen as an attempt to direct the conflict to be handled on theological terms, rather than secular terms also in the UN.

6.3 An influencing factor

Determining the effects of the ICEJ advocacy work alone is hard to measure. However, the ICEJ is part of a much larger advocacy network of other Christian Zionists and pro-Israel Jews – in sum the pro-Israel lobby, which is most influential on Capitol Hill. It is commonly believed the Jewish lobby has been the obstacle of peace in the Middle East, because it lobbies in favour of Israeli interests. Israel also receives an annually aid-pack of USD 3 billion in military aid, plus additional funding for developing missile defence systems, thus making Israel the largest precipitant country of US aid (Waxman 2013, 360).

However, according to Dov Waxman, the American Jews have, especially after the Six-Day war in 1967, supported Israel. The majority of these Jews supported Israel out of identity

¹⁰⁸ The return of the 12th Imam doctrine in Shi’s Islam is built upon the belief where the Imam had the position as the leader of the whole community and was descended from Ali, the fourth Caliph. The Imam had a holy position and was embedded with supernatural powers, however in the end of the 10th century, the 12th imam was forced into the Great Occultation, but he will return on the Day of Judgment (Vogt 2005, 185, 202-204).

rather than ideological reasons (Waxman 2013, 362). The majority of the Jews therefore support centrist pro-Israeli lobbies, which are more neutral in its support of Israel than the left- and right-wing lobbies, which are much smaller. In other words, the Jewish pro-Israeli lobby is not homogeneous and they frequently oppose each other, and are thus not as forceful by its own (Waxman 2013, 362-4). The Christian Zionist network, however, is supporting the Jewish right-wing lobby, and therefore the influence of the pro-Israeli lobby is quite extensive and influential. Combined with other Christian Zionist groups, the ICEJ therefore raises more extensive influence on the policy makers.

In addition, the ICEJ works in national branches, where the ICEJ can call for debate and agenda setting. In the cases I have presented in this chapter, we have seen how the ICEJ has responded and argued against “de-legitimization” of Israel. In this doing, the ICEJ is serving Israeli interests; but can this also work counterproductive? According to a poll conducted by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the summer of 2014, statistics showed 52 percent of the Israeli population desires a two state solution – not the outcome of the ICEJ desires (KAS 2014). With half of the Israeli citizens supporting a two state solution, and if the peace negotiations hypothetically bear fruits, a Palestinian state could become a reality. Would that be a step back for the ICEJ? Malcolm Hedding has stated if Israel would lose land, this would not affect the ICEJ’s faith. Because the only time when Israel will become *Eretz Israel* fully and wholly, is in the Messianic Age. Before that, the Middle East conflict will be about the redemption of Israel and the Second Coming of Christ (Hedding 2006c, 37). In other words, a two state solution or any other solutions raised by the international community are in the ICEJ’s narrative a possibility, but not a desired outcome, as we have seen in this chapter. The ICEJ with other Christian Zionists continues to defend the Jewishness of Israel in the public sphere, making many of the Israeli non-Jewish minority feel neglected. Some of the Palestinian Christian churches has condemned the way the Christian Zionists operates inside Israel and claimed Christian Zionism is an obstacle for peace in the region.

7 Theo-political implications of the ICEJ activities

“We reject the teachings of Christian Zionism that facilitate and support these policies as they advance racial exclusivity and perpetual war rather than the gospel of universal love, redemption and reconciliation taught by Jesus Christ”.

The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism,
(Stephen Sizer 2006)

In 2006, a joint statement was made by four Palestinian church-leaders that proclaimed “Christian Zionism is a modern theological and political movement that embraces the most extreme ideological position of Zionism, thereby becoming detrimental to a just peace within Palestine” (Stephen Sizer 2006). The ICEJ, together with Bridges for Peace and Christian Friends of Israel, made a joint response to the declaration, where they claimed it used inflammatory language and expressed views that were far from the truth.

The ICEJ has received much criticism for its work in assisting Jews to Israel and for supporting right-wing Israeli politics. As seen in the previous chapters, the ICEJ uses several strategies in order to ensure a future Eretz Israel. In this chapter, I seek to discuss my main findings made from analysing the ICEJ’s strategies, and point at some of the ethical dilemmas raised from the critical voices.

I will therefore, in this final chapter, take the Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism as the onset to discuss the criticism the ICEJ has received from other Christian Churches in Israel and Palestine, and how the ICEJ’s work is seen as part of an obstacle for a peace solution. I will start by presenting the Jerusalem Declaration and then discuss the main points of critic the ICEJ has received, and how the ICEJ responded. The issues I will highlight are is this is a modern political ideology or a faith deeply rooted within Christianity; if the ICEJ’s work in assisting Jews to Israel is really a colonization of Israel rather than assisting in Jewish homecoming and lastly the obstacles for peace-solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

7.1 The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism

The Jerusalem Declaration was signed by the heads of the Jerusalem churches: the Patriarch Michael Sabbah from the Latin Patriarchate, the Archbishop Swerios Malki Mourad from the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal from the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East and Bishop Munib Younan from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Donald Wagner and Stephen Sizer from the

organization Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center co-wrote the Declaration on request from the heads of the Jerusalem churches.

The Jerusalem Declaration began with rejecting the Christian Zionist theology and claimed Christian Zionism is a “modern theological and political movement that embraces the most extreme ideological positions of Zionism” (Stephen Sizer 2006). It further condemned the cooperation between the Christian Zionists and its cooperation with “elements” of the governments in Israel and the United States that “are presently imposing their unilateral pre-emptive borders and dominion over Palestine” and for undermining the security of all peoples of the Middle East (Stephen Sizer 2006). Further, the Declaration stated Christian Zionism does not hold any theological validity because it is a modern theological and political movement with an extreme position of Zionism and an obstacle for peace. The teachings of Christian Zionism “advanced racial exclusivity and perpetual war rather than the gospel of universal love and reconciliation taught by Jesus Christ” (Stephen Sizer 2006) Instead of focusing on healing the nations and liberate themselves from militarism and occupation, the Christian Zionists condemned the world to the doom of Armageddon. The Jewish settlements and the Separation Wall were condemned and claimed to be obstacle for a future Palestinian State, in the Declaration.

The Declaration ended with a call for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. The Palestinians Church leaders emphasised that the Muslims and Christians in the Holy Land constitute the Palestinian people, who are capable of living peacefully together with the Israelis. However, the leaders stated the “Christian Zionists and its allies are justifying colonization, apartheid and empire-building” – many of the same accusations raised by the international community. (Stephen Sizer 2006).

Even though the declaration was directed towards Christian Zionism in general, the ICEJ (together with the organizations Bridges for Peace and Christian Friends of Israel) led the counterattack and issued a statement that summed up six points of objection to the Declaration (see also Clark 2007, 227).

The ICEJ responded to the Jerusalem Declaration by stating its concern of the negative opinions about Christian Zionism, presented by the clerics, and claimed it used inflammatory language to express views that were far from the truth (ICEJ 2006). The ICEJ continued by stating Christian Zionism is a theological position, with a literal reading of Bible that rejects the “replacement” theology confessed by the Palestinian Churches. On the accusation of a Christian

Zionist contribution to suppress the Palestinians, the ICEJ responded by criticizing the Church's "pivotal role" towards the persecutions of the Jews throughout history.

The ICEJ also claimed that Christian Zionism was a modern and heretical phenomenon by claiming that there have existed Christians from all traditional backgrounds for 2000 years, who have asserted to the theology where "God gave the Land of Canaan as the everlasting possession to the Jewish people" (ICEJ 2006).

The ICEJ also dismissed the accusations of Christian Zionists are advancing racial exclusivity, the ICEJ claimed Christian Zionists love all people equality, but the Jews have been chosen to bring redemption to mankind. In addition, Jesus Christ, "our Messiah and King" was born of Jewish parents, which makes the Jewish people "as our royal family", but Christian Zionists reject hatred of any people (ICEJ 2006).

The ICEJ also stated Christian Zionism does not base its theology on end-time prophecies, but rather on the faithful covenant promises given by God to Abraham to possess for all eternity. The ICEJ also rejected the Christian Zionists' "thirst for Armageddon" and its claim to know the "sequence of events that will lead to it" (ICEJ 2006).

On the position of security, the Christian Zionists recognize Israel's right to exist in peace and security, but biblical considerations regulates Israel's national existence, and "these have to do with the issues of justice and righteousness and *her* treatment of the stranger within her midst" (ICEJ 2006). The two last points claimed Christian Zionists are no threat to anyone – in fact, they have donated millions of dollars to non-Jewish minority groups, and Christian Zionists call for dialogue with the Jerusalem clerics. The ICEJ concluded the declaration by stating the Jerusalem Declaration was one sided and unbalanced as it ignored the terror threat from Hamas. Israel was not the only problem in the conflict. In the same manner as the Jerusalem Declaration – called for the Christians to speak up and pray for reconciliation in the holy lands. It also called to affirm Israel's right to live in peace and security without the threat from the jihadists, who seeks to "colonize the Jewish state by bringing it into the Empire of Islam" (ICEJ 2006).

7.2 A Modern political ideology?

The first point of criticism in the Jerusalem Declaration was the *political* aspect of Christians Zionist theology. The ICEJ has previously claimed that its work is solely religious, as seen in section 4.4 (Weber 2004, 217). However, after having seen how the ICEJ works by participating in assisted migration and in the public debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,

the ICEJ's work must be understood as highly political. However, are Christian Zionism political because it work with political matters or is it political *per se* where the Christian Zionism becomes an ideology?

Susan Harding argues all religious discourse is political and efficacious. Religion as apolitical is thus myth that she claims drives from early twentieth-century intellectuals. It was believed doctrines could cause or influence behaviour “when that behaviour conforms in a literal way to previously articulated statements”, however if the doctrines advice against such behaviour, then that particular belief is apolitical (Harding 1994, 59).¹⁰⁹ This thought – of a separation between religion and politics– has been working for the benefit for religious actors, who have been able to block critical thoughts about religious discourse. Harding here argues the political character of dispensational movements must be seen *as* political in its reading of contemporary events of history as God's dealing with world today (Harding 1994, 60). This conception of *knowing history* is central in the Christian Zionist narrative, and in the apocalyptic language of this *knowing history* results in behavior. For the ICEJ, this is seen as it *knows* Israel will be restored to Eretz Israel, and the “vast majority” of Jews *will* eventually return there in the future (IKAJ 2012a). The *language* of this knowing has caused the ICEJ to take a central role in this course of history. Hence, we see how the ICEJ has constructed a narrative that calls for political behavior in assisting the Jews to Israel, where there are no distinction between religion and politics.

Harding was primarily preoccupied with showing how the use of apocalyptic language cause action and how dispensationalists have constructed a narrative where Christians are agents in the course of history. However, when I talked to both David Parsons and Howard Flower, I got the impression their motivation of was not solely constituted by biblical obligations. Both emphasised a deep emotional concern for the wellbeing of the Jewish people and a desire to make up for centuries of Christian persecution of the Jews, which was also stated in the ICEJ's response to the Jerusalem Declaration. Therefore, in addition to the ICEJ's *knowing* Jews will return to Israel, the motivations restoring the reputation of Christians among the Jewish people is also a factor, which perhaps often becomes overshadowed by scholars and the media. Then some questions must be asked: Are these emotional motivations just a pragmatic “translation” of biblical obligations of the gentiles to “comfort” the Jews in order for the Jews to accept their charity? Can this concern for the

¹⁰⁹In religious phenomenology research it was a common opinion that the believers “always was right”, however in newer research on religion, it is now recommended to have a critical perspective, by asking “cui bonum” (to whose good?), according to Siv Ellen Kraft (2006, 260).

Jewish wellbeing be separated from the biblical obligations? Finally, it can be asked, do these motives really matter? I would argue it is important for the ICEJ to communicate these motivations, because it is a central aspect in the ICEJ's objective to reconcile Jews and Christians. Not all Jews seems too concerned about the Christian Zionist eschatology, however, as seen in section 5.31. For the Jewish Agency it was more important that the Christians supported its cause, and End-Time expectations were not seen as an issue. We can still, understand the ICEJ's emphasis for the Jewish well-being – rather than merely as a part in God's providential plan – is used to increase its legitimacy within the Israeli society. Through this *comfort* aspect, it seemed just as important to make up for a troubled history of Jewish persecutions and genocides as religious and political legitimacy for the Jews to have their own state. Hence, the ICEJ denies that the Zionism is a form of racism. For them, it seems as if Zionism becomes an integrated part of Judaism and the Jews' right to have a safe haven (see also section 6.2.2).

The ICEJ did not directly respond to the Jerusalem Declaration on this point of critic, regarding its political content in its theology. However, in the ICEJ's engagement in, but also in its rhetoric of, restoring the Jews to Israel, the separation between religion and politics becomes completely removed. The former Director of the Finnish branch dr. Ulla Järvillehto, claimed both support to Jewish immigration and to Israel are political matters, and thus one cannot be apolitical or neutral, as seen in section 4.4 (cited in Widnes 2007, 102). The ICEJ has thus taken a highly political orientation, by criticising other mainstream Christian churches for not taking a position on Israel.

7.2.1 Pragmatic literal reading of the Bible?

Is the ICEJ's narrative an example of a modern form of Christian theology, as the Jerusalem Declaration indicated (however, the Declaration did not define what it put in the word *modern*)? In the ICEJ's response, it claimed the restoration doctrine is rooted in various Christian traditions that have held this view for two thousand years. Even though millenarian movements have had conceptions about of the Second Coming of Christ prior to the Reformation, it was not until after the Reformation, when the thoughts of a Jewish restoration to Israel led to the Christian Zionist movement. José Casanova states the dispensational thinking, where the Scripture is full of hidden meanings and of scientific facts of the past, present and future, was relatively new (Casanova 1994, 141, see chapter 2). Since the Reformation, the Christian Zionist movement has read End-Time signs in world events and had different opinions of how active role the Christians should

take in God's providential plan. In other words, the movement has since the Reformation been dynamic in its narrative, where contemporary world events were read in light of the Bible. In that way, the Christian Zionism has been shaped by world events, in order for the world to make sense in its narrative (Clark 2007, 289). Harding argues the 1980s was the turning point when the dispensationalists became political active, but the Christian Zionists have since the seventeenth century been involved in political matters (see section 2.2.4).

The criticism in the Jerusalem Declaration also concerned the ethical sides of the End-Time theology, where it accuses the Christian Zionists to have condemned the world to doom of Armageddon. It dismissed the apocalyptic End-Time theology as false teaching because it corrupts the biblical message of love, justice and reconciliations. The latter part is a central aspect for the ICEJ as well. The ICEJ asserts to a theology where there is space for salvation for all of human kind – also the Arabs will receive salvation when Christ returns to Earth and creates the Millennial Kingdom, as we have seen in section 4. 2.5. The ICEJ also emphasises God loves for all people and therefore we can understand this love-message is present within the ICEJ's narrative. In addition, the ICEJ also provides some 20 percent of its budget to non-Jewish minorities in Israel. However, this only covers Israeli minorities – not the Palestinians. The interfaith dialogue between Muslims, Christians and Jews, which the mainstream churches in Palestine are more concerned about, is seen differently by the ICEJ. While reconciliation between Jews and Christians becomes essential for the ICEJ's work, a Jewish and Christian reconciliation with Muslims has no central role in the ICEJ's work. In section 4.2.5, we have seen how the ICEJ understands Islam to be an evil religion and the Islamic *term* Allah to be anti-Semitic. We can understand this as while God – hence the ICEJ – loves all people, Muslims, seduced by Islam, are influenced by evilness, hence they are in the way of fulfilling eschatological promises.

The ICEJ believes the Armageddon will take place in the End-Times, however, instead of focusing on this aspect, the ICEJ has taken an approach where it focuses more on the biblical promises. The ICEJ's narrative is thus more directed towards contemporary events rather than the apocalypse. In chapter 3 and 4, we have seen how the ICEJ has departed from the orthodox dispensational view of the Rapture and the coming of the Antichrist in the Tribulation before the Second Coming of Christ. According to the ICEJ, the Christians will remain on earth with the Jews and experience all the disasters before the Second Coming of Christ. In this way, it might seem as if the ICEJ has adapted a more pragmatic theology. On one hand, this could mean ICEJ, as an umbrella NGO that draws members from different Christian denominations, could retrieve more followers, who do not believe in a spectacular apocalypse. On the other

hand, we can also interpret this as a pragmatic approach of the ICEJ to gain more accept from the Jewish society and from Israeli politicians, which can be seen in its rejecting controversial aspects for the dispensational doctrine, such as the need for building a third Temple, as seen in section 3.4.1.

Jack Corcos from the Jewish agency, as seen in section 5.3.1, saying he and other Jews do not care about the eschatological conceptions the ICEJ and other Christian Zionist groups. It seems therefore not as a big issue for all Jews, however, the ICEJ's emphasis on providing comfort and support for the Jewish people, can still be understood to as a pragmatic approach in order to gain more support in the Israeli society.

7.3 Colonialism or a homecoming?

One of the main points of critics to the Christian Zionist movement has been referred to as colonisation of Palestine, which also the Jerusalem Declaration pointed out. From section 5.2, we remember the issue regarding whether it is possible to speak about a homecoming of a people who have not close connections to the homeland, and the notion about home only exists in the memories (Baumann 2010). The ICEJ certainly thinks it is a homecoming, which is seen as a fulfilment of biblical promises in its *knowing* of history, to use Harding's words.

All Jewish homecoming makes an impact on the Israeli society by preserving the Jewish character of Israel, also preserves the Jewish identity of the Jews migrating to Israel, as Jack Corcos pointed out (see section 5.3.1). Hence, the ICEJ's participation in assisting in Jewish homecoming is a strategy that is beneficial not only in its own narrative, but also serves the Jewish Zionist cause and strengthens Israel's position as a Jewish state. However, in the case where the ICEJ is assisting of the Bnei Menashe, there are some dilemmas raised within the Israeli society. The Jewish identity of the Bnei Menashe was questioned together with whether the tribe only was moved to Israel in order to reinforce Israel's claim to the West Bank territories. For the ICEJ this is unproblematic because it does not get involved with the question of who is a Jew or not, not does it recognize an occupation of the West Bank. Because the immigration of the members of the Bnei Menashe tribe fits into the ICEJ's narrative, the ICEJ is sponsoring them. However, it seems the ICEJ's vague definition of who is a Jew, becomes pragmatic tactic in its preservation of Israel. On one hand, the ICEJ can freely decide which people that fits into biblical promises of homecoming, but on the other side, this could also function as a strategic way of assisting immigrants that are patriotic to the Israeli state. In the case of the Bnei Menashe, the ICEJ's collaboration partner, Shavei Israel, has settled immigrants from

the tribe in the West Bank. Despite the fact that the ICEJ has no direct impact on where the Jews are settled when they return to Israel, it is reasonable to think some of these recent immigrants from India might also settle in Jewish Settlements in the West Bank. If this becomes the case, then this will further contribute to Israel's claim to the Occupied Territories in a peace solution, which is a problem for the Palestinians. The ICEJ is also sponsoring individuals in Jewish settlements in the West Bank. These two cases thus enhances the accusations of colonisation on the Occupied Territories.

For the ICEJ, however, these issues are seen as unproblematic; as seen in chapter 6, it does not recognize the Occupied Territories. The ICEJ claims in a potential two-state solution Jewish settlers would not be allowed to live in a Palestinian state, a denial that would be grotesque (Juliussen 2013a). The ICEJ does not really say what would become of the Palestinians if the peace negotiations would result in a one-state solution. Leif Wellerop, former director of the ICEJ's Norwegian branch, suggested the Palestinians who does not want to live within an Israeli state can move to Jordan, which he regarded as a Palestinian state (Sylte 2009). The Palestinians can live in Israel if they want to, according to the ICEJ. However, they must then accept that the Israel is a Jewish state, which we saw in chapter 6 is a problematic issue in the international community. The question is then if the Palestinians were to live in a Jewish state with certain privileges for Jewish Israelis, but would such a solution not make the Palestinian people second-class citizens and an apartheid state? The ICEJ, however, emphasises that there are equal rights for all Israeli citizens. In accordance with the Basic Law on minorities there are equal rights for all minorities inside Israeli borders (see section 6.2.1).

There are nearly five million Palestinians living in the surrounding neighbour countries, who demand a right to return (Brynen 2013, 110).¹¹⁰ It seems unlikely they would be allowed to return to Israel, because a return would result in an unnumbered Jewish population and thus undermining the Jewishness of the state. In a one-state solution the international community would likely demand equal rights for all citizens in a democratic Israeli, such as the right to vote (we have seen in chapter 6 how the ICEJ also has emphasized the democratic character of Israel with equal rights for its inhabitants). If the Israeli demography constituted of a Palestinian majority, then the Jewishness of Israel would fall on its own premises. The ICEJ's need for Israel's recognition as Jewish state is essential,

¹¹⁰ There are 4.8 million Palestinians registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in 2012. PLO, however, operates with 7 million in the Palestinian diaspora (Brynen 2013, 110).

otherwise, if Israel loses its Jewish character, then Israel would just become an empty “vehicle” without the redemptive purpose, because Israel would no longer *belong* to the Jews.

How would this affect the ICEJ’s narrative if Israel suddenly would lose its Jewish population as a majority? In section 4.2.3, we have seen the ICEJ believes there will likely be only two exiles, where the second is now returning. However, God continues to discipline Israel, and therefore Israel might lose land and a two state-solution would thus not affect the ICEJ’s narrative. In this one-state solution, on the other hand, the Jews have neither been exiled nor lost any territories, the Jews have just become a minority without any special rights or privileges and this could potentially become a theological problem.¹¹¹ It seems therefore maintaining status quo of the Israel-Palestinian situation is the best option for the ICEJ. In this way, the ICEJ can continue in assisting Jewish immigrants where some are likely to settle in the occupied territory, enhancing the difficulties for a withdrawal of the Jews living in these settlements, while at the same time ensuring a Palestinian population does not undermines the Jewishness of Israel. Is this a homecoming or a colonization of Israel? It seems one does not exclude the other.

With its Zionist allies, Christians and Jews, the ICEJ works with brining Jews to Israel in their common goal of preserving the Jewishness of Israel. There was a concern for disintegration of the Jewish identity of the Jews living in the Diaspora, where the Jewish agency believed Israel was the only place in the world where the Jewish identity could be preserved. A precondition for many Jews to move to Israel was also seen to depend on the Jewish character of Israel (see chapter 6).

7.3.1 Dilemmas for the Diaspora?

Even though the ICEJ has raised concerns about the current situation for the Jewish in the Diaspora, the ICEJ has thus been accused for taking advantage of the Jews exposed to danger in the Diaspora. For instance, the Baptist online newspaper Ethics Daily accused the ICEJ of exploiting the Ukrainian Crisis (2014) by encouraging Ukrainian Jews to migrate to Israel (Kaylor 2014). The ICEJ is also participating in French Jews’ migration that moves as a result of increased anti-Semitism and economic downtime (see section 5.5.2). This might seem as a win-win situation for both the ICEJ and for the Jewish Aliyah-makers.

¹¹¹ Even though, as Victoria Clark and Harding notes, the Christian Zionist movement has on several occasion changed its ideology – like a chameleon – where interpretation of events are adjusted to fit its narrative. Therefore, should not everything go after plan, then, the ICEJ would likely be able to adjust its narrative as well.

However, the signals the ICEJ sends out to the Diaspora nations when it encourage the Jews to leave their “host nations”, could be concerning. The ICEJ seems to benefit from poor living condition in the Diaspora (whether this is poverty or anti-Semitism), which some find provoking, such as the Ethics Daily.

However, it can also be pointed on problematic issues such as how the host countries handle the loss of labour force caused by large emigration, or the pressure the Jewish émigrés will have on the Israeli society, when organizations such as the ICEJ exclusively assists the Jews to Israel. On the other hand, a high Jewish immigration rate will sustain the Israeli demography as primary Jewish and provide a high labour force for Israel.

The ICEJ’s public defence can also be understood as a way of giving legitimacy to Israel in the hope more Jews will feel called to immigrate to Israel. In this way, the ICEJ can also be seen to conduct a strategic pull factor towards the Jewish people in the Diaspora. In this relation it would be interesting in a future research to look at how the Christian Zionist movement is working in order to counter the ‘Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions-campaign’ against Israel – raised by representatives from Palestinian civil society. The Christian Zionist movement, including Israel, seems thus to have launched a counter-campaign where “friends of Israel” can buy Israeli products through the Christian Zionists organizations’ webpages.¹¹² It can thus be interesting to see if this had any effect on the Israeli economy.

7.4 The threats to the Jewish state

When the Church leaders in the Jerusalem Declaration criticized the Christian Zionists for lacking sympathy with the Palestinians’ suffering under the occupation, the ICEJ responded the church leaders did not take the threat of Jihadists under consideration. Any bad mistreatment of the Palestinians are a result of the Palestinians own incapability to select good leaders. As seen in section 6.2.3, the ICJE claims both Hamas and Fatah are incapable of ruling in a sovereign Palestinian state, and the Palestinians sufferings are not a result of Israel’s occupation.

The Palestinians poor leadership that opposes Israel is seen in relation to evil that attempts to prevent God’s providential plan. In the ICEJ’s dualistic worldview, Israel is seen as the light to all nations – as truth-bearer, while the rest of the world is under the influence by evil forces. Israel’s struggles and setbacks are explained by a pragmatic approach by the ICEJ:

¹¹² In 2014, the ICEJ launched “Israel Buyer’s Guide”, a booklet published in order to help combating the BDS-campaign and other Israel-boycotts. According to the ICEJ, the booklet will be distributed to “millions of evangelicals worldwide” who will be informed of which Israeli products to purchase in their home country, and to promote Israel’s innovating contributions in the fields of medicine, science and technology (ICEJ-News 2014).

the Jews does not live in reconciliation with God, hence He disciplines them through evil, which is manifested in the Palestinian Israeli conflict (see section 4.2.5). Israel's struggles thus confirms the ICEJ's narrative of *knowing history*.

In the opinion of the ICEJ the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as the threat from the surrounding countries such as Iran, needed to be handled theologically. However, the ICEJ has received little resonance from the international community in its efforts to turn the conflict into theological concerns. Therefore, the ICEJ has adopted a secular language, where it can advocate the Israeli cause.

7.4.1 A cosmic battle in a secular language

The cosmic battle is set in the arena of the international society, where the ICEJ supports Israel by combating de-legitimization and accusations of Israel (see chapter 6). In this combat with de-legitimization, moral relativism and the threat from Islam are seen as the main threat to a continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

In the battle with relativism, the ICEJ has realized its own narrative is just one of many that compete to be heard in the public sphere. Biblical arguments are thus reframed in order to receive resonance within religious neutral forums in order to combat the de—legitimization of Israel (see section 6.1). In this work, the ICEJ is a part of a Christian Zionist activist network. Many authors on previous research of Christian Zionism have stated that Christian Zionists have massive influence in American Foreign Affairs. However, as we have seen, the Christian Zionists activist network is a global phenomenon, through which it promotes Israeli and Christian interests with secular arguments. The potential power the Christian Zionists have in Europe and on a global scale should therefore be shed more light in future research. The ICEJ's, with other Christian Zionist organizations', ability to find secular arguments in this conflict are interesting because they are rooted in decisions made by the Western Powers, without the consent from the nations affected by these decisions.

For example were some of the secular arguments used by the ICEJ, rooted in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the decision of the League of Nations in 1922 to create British Mandatory Palestine, which was intended to become a homeland for the Jewish people. However, this decision was made by the Western Powers, and is in stark contrast with the Palestinian narrative's, which regard the granting of the Palestinian Mandate to Britain as illegal (Scham 2013, 34). In other words, can this decision be seen as valid arguments for the ICEJ, or does the ICEJ just use what it has of arguments in order to reject any demands from

the Palestinians to have their own state? If this argument is not valid, the ICEJ is left with their biblical arguments, which receive little resonance in the meeting with the relativistic international society.

The Jerusalem Declaration denounced the Christian Zionist support of the Separation Wall on confiscated Palestinian ground, while the ICEJ has rejected this as a necessary protection against the threat of Hamas and Islamic Jihadists who seeks embed the Jewish state within the Empire of Islam (ICEJ 2006). This is a threat that the ICEJ finds concerning on different levels. Firstly, because it seeks to destroy the Jewish state, but secondly, because a consequence for the Jews by living under this terror threat might lead to an emigration of Israeli Jews, as David Parsons noted (see section 5.5.5).

The ICEJ see the Middle East conflict is a theological conflict, and must be treated as such rather than disputes over land, water resources or accusations of an apartheid system (see section 4.2.5). The conflict is about Islam seeking the destruction of Israel, according to the ICEJ. While the Jerusalem Declaration claimed Israelis and Palestinians were capable of living together, the ICEJ fears this coexistence in a one-state solution can undermine the Jewish population of Israel, hence threatening the existence of the Jewish state. The ICEJ's desire to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a secular manner has made little impact on the international community. However, with an increasing threat from radical Islamists in the region, the ICEJ could potentially draw more attention to its cause; The Christian Zionist network could then receive support from political anti-Islamic, right-wing- populist and nationalist parties in a common alliance against Islam (see e.g. Wodak, KhosraviNik, and Mral 2013).

The Jerusalem Declaration claimed the Christian Zionists undermines peace in the region, but for the ICEJ, supporting Israel is just a matter of being on God's side in a cosmic battle, as we have seen in this chapter. In the light of the Jerusalem Declaration, I have pointed at some central points of critic directed towards Christian Zionism, where the ICEJ has responded. We have here seen how the ICEJ lies more emphasis upon biblical promises and personal motivations rather than future apocalyptic events in the future. Through its work with the Jews, the ICEJ has adapted a pragmatic reading of the Bible in order to facilitate its work in assisting Jews to Israel. Its critics claim this work undermines a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, according to the ICEJ, peace will come in the region when Christ returns to Earth to establish the Millennial Kingdom – until then, the ICEJ will continue to assist in Jewish homecoming in the hope of an imminent End of the World.

8 Summary and conclusion

“So the Bible is a truly amazing book which tells the story of a truly remarkable people. It is not a collection of fables and fairy tales. Rather, the Bible is the proven Word of God! And the modern-day return of Israel is proof of its reliability, as well as of God's faithfulness to His promises and His sovereignty over the affairs of men”.

David Parsons, PR-director at the ICEJ (Parsons 2014b)

My main goal with this thesis has been to demonstrate how the ICEJ's strategy of assisted migration contributes to preserve (and affirm) Israel as a Jewish state. I have answered this issue by interviewing representatives from the ICEJ in addition to analysing published articles by the ICEJ. With this method, I have showed, in the light of Susan Harding's perspective of dispensationalism, how the ICEJ uses biblical verses to construct a narrative where it in the assisting in Jewish immigration to Israel, participates in God's providential plan.

My first research question was about how does the ICEJ conceive the biblical passages regarding the necessity of Jewish return to Israel and the preservation of Israel as a Jewish state as part of a soteriological scheme? In the ICEJ's conception of the infallibility of the Bible, which is regarded as pre-written history, the vast majority of the Jewish population will return to the Promised Land. In the ultimate goal, Israel must become Eretz Israel as described in the Old Testament; only then will Christ return to establish the millennial Kingdom on Earth. The ICEJ therefore employs a number of strategies in order to participate in God's providential plan, as we have seen in its assistant migration work and its advocacy work for Israel.

An interesting discovery in this study was the ICEJ are more concerned about fulfilling biblical promises, rather than focusing on apocalyptic events in the future. In this doing, the ICEJ seems to have developed a pragmatic approach in its collaboration with actors in the Jewish society, such as the Jewish agency in order to facilitate a restoration of Eretz Israel.

This leads to my second and third research questions, what strategies does the ICEJ employs in order to assist the Jews to Israel, and what effects this have or might have? Through interviews and analysing published articles, I have obtained information about the ICEJ's work and looked on how the ICEJ in its own view regards its work. This has represented an adequate approach because I have been primarily interested in looking on the ICEJ official version of its strategies of assisting the Jews to Israel.

Through assisted migration, the ICEJ contributes in preserving the Jewish character of Israel, because assisting Jews to Israel contributes to maintaining a Jewish majority in the Israeli demography. This is essential if the Israeli-Palestinian peace process would result in a

one state solution, by the ICEJ. If a one-state should be a future solution to the conflict, then a return of the Palestinian refugees would put the Jewish character of Israel in jeopardy. Thus, it is within the ICEJ's interest to encourage Jews to return to Israel to secure a Jewish majority. In order to enable this goal, the ICEJ has employed a number of strategies, which seems to have been made out of pragmatic considerations. For example, a strategy necessary for the ICEJ to achieve its goal is to cooperate with other Jewish Zionist organizations that have the legal mandate to make the Jewish immigrants Israeli citizens. Through cooperation with organizations such as the Jewish Agency and the Shavei Israel, the ICEJ is also able to extend its outreach in finding Aliyah candidates. The ICEJ had not any special definition of who is Jew, therefore the ICEJ was also quite flexible of who it sponsors in its assisting of Jews and left that decision the Israeli migration organizations. We have seen how the ICEJ uses "net fishing" as a tactic to find Aliyah candidates, but also used advertising on the internet to encourage Jews to make Aliyah. In the case of the Russian Jews, the ICEJ took a direct part in seeking up the Jews in the Diaspora. In most cases, it assist in Jewish homecoming by sponsoring airplane tickets. An interesting notice was that the ICEJ always meets the newly arrived immigrants at the airport. By doing this, the ICEJ could enhance the reconciliation between Christians and Jews and receive more influence on the Israeli society.

In its cooperation with Shavei Israel, the ICEJ assists non-halachic Jews, but the ICEJ is convinced the people of the Bnei Menashe tribe are descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel, and thus the immigration of these people becomes a central part of the ICEJ's work. A collaboration partner of the ICEJ considered the Bnei Menashe to be Israeli patriots and to have a strong Jewish identity. By assisting in immigration of the Bnei Menashe, the ICEJ is potentially enhancing the Jewish identity and patriotic attitudes to Israel, which seems to be a strategic step in the preservation of Israel as a Jewish state. Another interesting discovery was found in the Bnei Menashe tendency to settle in illegal Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories, according to the international community. It is reasonable to assume some of the new immigrants will join the settlers in these communities. In addition, the ICEJ is also providing financial aid to Jews living on Occupied Territories, and therefore the ICEJ is thus participating in strengthening Israel's entitlement to Palestinian Territories, and a consequence could potentially be a weakened position for a two-state solution.

The ICEJ also contributes to the integration of immigrants in the Israeli society after their arrival. Here the ICEJ sponsors a number of Jewish organizations. The ICEJ hopes will prevent an emigration from Israel. The ICEJ did not share Jack Corcos from the Jewish

Agency's concern for Jewish emigration; still, the ICEJ provides necessary financial aid and equipment to Jews living in Israel as a part of its "comfort" to the Jews, in order to make sure the Jews are able to live in a nation under an entrenched conflict.

In this thesis, I have only looked on some of the criticism Israel receives from the international community and from the local Palestinians. These critical voices opposes the core of the ICEJ's interests, such as an exclusive Jewish immigration, Jewish settlements in the West Bank and the return of Israel to the Old Testament biblical borders, which in the ICEJ's narrative is absolutely essential for God's providential plan. The ICEJ therefore employ strategies used in the public sphere, in order to defend Israel's actions, as a safeguard the Jewishness Israel in the future. The ICEJ is a part of a much wider Christian Zionist activist network where it advocates for Israel through the media, by lobbying in the European Union, the United Nations and on Capitol Hill in the USA, and by raising petition campaigns. In this work, the ICEJ has adopted a secular language in order to create resonance with the policy makers. The ICEJ regarded the de-legitimization of Israel as part of its narrative of why bad things are happening to Israel. In order to solve a theodicy problem, the ICEJ divides the world in good and evil; where evil does everything in its power do destroy Israel. In this way, the ICEJ would also be able to explain different scenarios where for example Israel would lose land in a two-state solution, while at the same time claiming God is in absolute control of the course of history.

After having looked at the ICEJ's work in preserving Israel as a Jewish state in the future, we have seen how the ICEJ combines theology and politics in a forceful legitimization of its work. In Israel, it is allied with political right-wing parties such as Likud, while at a global scale the ICEJ is a part the Christian Zionist movement that influences policymakers. Through such a pragmatic stance, the ICEJ has gained a strong position in the Israeli society. While its critics has denounced its presence in Israel, its Zionist allies have warmly greeted the ICEJ's relentless efforts to restore the Jewish people to their ancient Promised Land.

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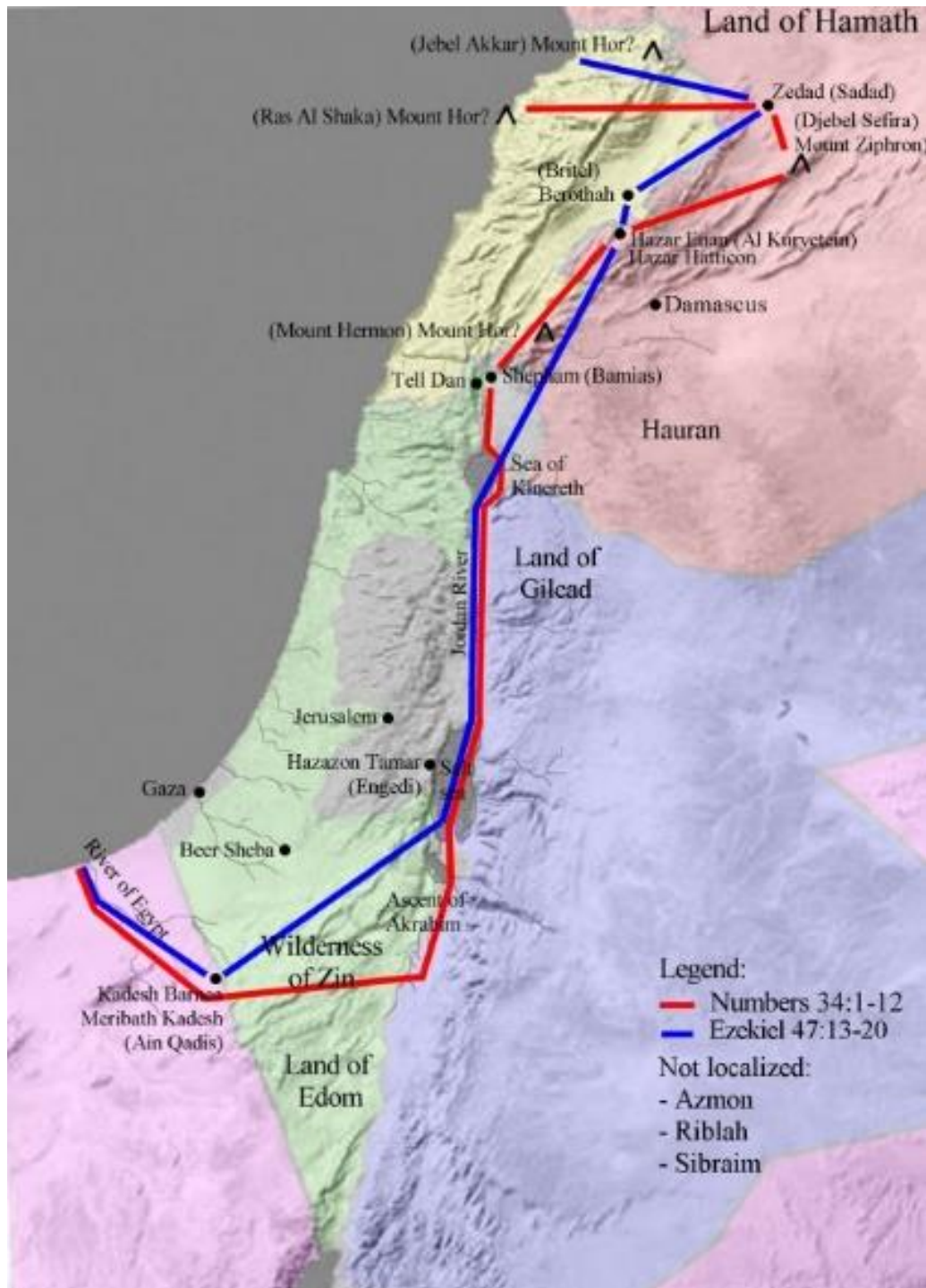
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Attachment

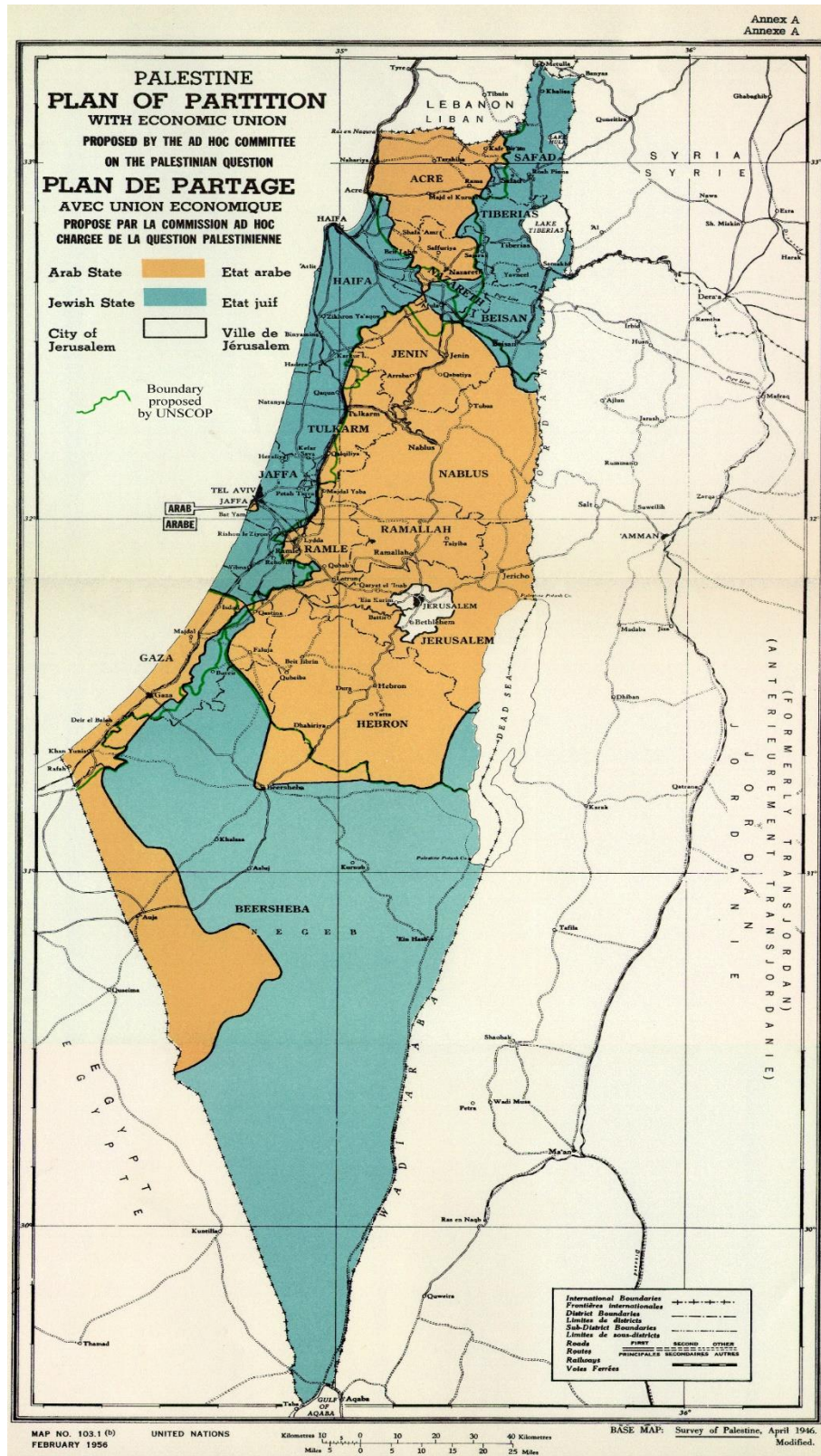
Figure 1 Map of Ancient Israel, c. 1200 – 586 BCE



Source:

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Land_of_Israel.jpg#mediaviewer/File:Map_Land_of_Israel.jpg

Figure 2 UN Partition Plan 1948



Source:

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UN_Palestine_Partition_Versions_1947.jpg#mediaviewer/File:UN_Palestine_Partition_Versions_1947.jpg

Figure 3 West Bank and Gaza under Israel Occupation 2007



Source:
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:West_Bank %26 Gaza Map 2007 \(Settlements\).png#mediaviewer/File:West Bank %26 Gaza Map 2007 \(Settlements\).png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:West_Bank_%26_Gaza_Map_2007_(Settlements).png#mediaviewer/File:West_Bank_%26_Gaza_Map_2007_(Settlements).png)