



## The Ingathering

By Rev. Gary Cristofaro

As I paused to reflect on the passing of another 'Fall Feast' season, I was reminded how we live in a world of choice and stark contrast. Obedience to the Lord has a polarizing effect on individuals as well as entire nations. We are all given a choice, both now and in the age to come. *And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. (Jeremiah 14:16-17)*



One of the other names for The Feast of Tabernacles is Chag Ha'asif or the Holiday of Ingathering. The re-birth of the modern state of Israel has made it possible for Jewish people from all over the world to be re-gathered and reunited in the land of their fathers. Concurrently all the evil forces of the world are attempting to gather together against the Jewish people who have returned to rebuild their ancient homeland. *They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more." For they have consulted together with one consent; They form a confederacy against You (Psalm 83:4-5)*

Thus the Holiday of Ingathering highlights a choice that confronts all mankind. Tragically for nearly two thousand years far too many Christians have been on the wrong side of that choice. Many times choosing to persecute, expel and even murder the Jewish people, often in the name of God. Sadly many fail to learn from our mistakes of the past. It was reported by the Jordan Times that as recently as September 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, traditional church leaders from the Middle-East met at the Al Aqsa Mosque to stand in solidarity with Moslems and denounce Israel's so-called attempt to "Judaize Jerusalem".

Fortunately, even as anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiments grow worse around the globe, there is a growing number of Christians who choose to love and support the Jewish people. Many even make pilgrimages to Israel for the Fall Feasts, recognizing the "Ingathering" of the nations as prophesized by Zechariah.

As Rabbi Eliezer Melamed recently wrote, "The attitude towards the Jews and the Torah is the litmus test". He went on to say: "The most serious problem we have with Christianity is its denial of God's choice of the Jewish people and of the eternal relevance of the Torah." So what can possibly make a difference in Jewish Christian relations? It is the Christians who choose to recognize the eternal relevance of the Torah and the words of the prophets and they are attempting to walk in humble obedience to them. And it is this sincere humility that has been received by some of the leaders in the Jewish world today.

At Ezra International we work alongside the Jewish Agency and are about God's work of the "Ingathering". It's our desire to be His humble servants in this enormous task. Our mandate and particular focus is to help the Jewish people who are too poor to help themselves. We work in places like Russia, Ukraine and many other nations around the world.

The Israeli government recently released figures for emigration, naming Russia and Ukraine as the two leading nations from which the Jewish people are making aliyah (the return). And as the social and economic instability of many nations increases we believe the numbers of those needing our help will only increase. We also sense a rising urgency regarding the safety of every Jewish person. Even in Paris, Jews have been advised never to walk alone and if they wear a kippah, to hide it under a baseball hat.

So the message of the "Ingathering" is to both the nations of the world and the Jewish people. *Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, And set up My standard for the peoples; They shall bring your sons in their arms, And your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders (Isaiah 49:22)*

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

Then the nations, which are left all around you, shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken it, and I will do it." (Ezekiel 36:36)

For many of the Jewish people in the Diaspora the choice has already been made to return to Israel. Yet due to poverty they face great challenges in making this a reality. Thus the message of the "Ingathering" also places a choice before those of us from the nations. We can repeat the mistake of the last century and turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the needs of our Jewish brothers and sisters. Or we can prove our love and obedience to the Word of The Holy One of Israel and help carry their burdens. The choice is clear!