



PRESS RELEASE



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Tony Blair Sleeps in Bethlehem - A Star Still Shines

Former Prime Minister and current Middle East Peace envoy Tony Blair is spending a night at a plush hotel in Bethlehem to prove that tourists are safe to visit this famous Biblical town. A week previously, in a Jerusalem hotel, a representative from Israel's Ministry of Tourism told pilgrims and potential tour leaders that they needed to "take home the message that this land is safe." It is the one message that both the Palestinian Authorities' representatives and Israel's spokespeople want the world of tourism and travel to hear - "Come and see for yourself." They might not agree on politics or geography but this they both understand - it is the tourist dollars and pounds that are the star in The Holy Lands today.

It is early December and Harvest Fields Commissioning International and OLI Productions are in Manger Square filming the follow-up to their award nominated film "Awakening Israel" entitled "The Land that God Remembers." This title is the next in their "Into All the World" Series of films. Tourist buses drop off their loads which adds to the small throng here. A Greek Orthodox funeral procession is actually the largest event here for some time and mourners far outnumber the wandering and weary pilgrims. They stoop and enter The Church of the Nativity through the minuscule door - an almost impossibility for an event such as this. To those gathered here this death means that there is one less "Christian" in a diminishing minority here in a town that once saw an 85% majority just over 50 years ago. Today they number less than 12% of the population. Yet the story of Israel and the P.T. is not a story that is easily reflected in figures and projections. The major issues date back thousands of years and will not be gone in any political posturing and gestures.

As the HFCI film crew departs the area another arrives to document this single town that has seen its share of both glory and pain, division and destiny. Jerusalem lies just a few miles away yet seems like an entirely different continent. To one side a "protective barrier" separates the two cultures. To the other, "a wall" blocks worthwhile employment. It could be that the solution to all of this is contained in the simplistic words of the angels who once hovered over the Shepherd's Fields, a stone's throw away from Manger Square, "peace on earth good will toward men"

The "Into All the World" series of DVD films are currently being broadcast throughout the Middle East on Sat 7, on The Australian Christian Channel, the Alfa and Omega Network (Romania and worldwide), Premier TV (U.K.), Shine TV (New Zealand), U Channel (Indonesia) and the Family 7 Network (Holland) and IFBN (Israel).

Harvest Fields Commissioning International is a U.K. Registered Charity with the purpose of assisting in raising up and encouraging churches and leaders in 39 countries and on all 5 continents for work in churches, charities and other humanitarian assistance groups. Its websites are at: <http://www.agapelive.net> and <http://www.hfci.net>.

For further information or high-res photos:
Press Department info@agapelive.net info@hfci.net