

THE JOSHUA FUND®

report

What's Inside

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Which Side Does God Love? Jews or Arabs?

BY JOEL C. ROSENBERG

Does it ever seem to you that some Christian leaders urge you to love and bless and support Israel and the Jewish people, while others urge you to love and bless and support the Palestinians? Is this Biblical? Is this really an “either/or” proposition?

At the most recent Epicenter Conference, we studied the Old Testament and learned that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob certainly loves Israel and the Jewish people and has a great plan and purpose for them. (*Isaiah 49:6, Joel 2:28-29*) We saw this reaffirmed in the New Testament, where the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

continues to communicate His love for Israel and the Jewish people and His great plan and purpose for them. (*Acts 3:25, Galatians 3:8, John 3:16, Romans 10:13*)

But we also examined the critical question: What do the Scriptures say concerning Israel's neighbors? We found that God has also vowed to love and bless all the nations of the earth, including Israel's neighbors. In Genesis 12:3, for example, the Lord said to Abram, “*And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.*” God spoke through the prophets of Israel to declare His love for all nations. “*And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered [saved].*” (Joel 2:32)

These important promises are confirmed in the New Testament.

The Apostle Peter said, “*It is you who are sons of the prophets and of the covenant, which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’*” (Acts 3:25) The Lord Jesus famously said – “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*” (John 3:16)

The Bible is clear: God loves all people. The Lord loves the Palestinians, the Lebanese, the Syrians, the Jordanians, the Egyptians, the Iraqis, and the Iranians. God also loves the Saudis, the people of the Gulf, the people of North Africa, and all the people of the epicenter. And because God loves them, we must love them. Eight times in the Bible it is written, “*Love your neighbor.*” (*Leviticus 19:18b, Matthew 5:43, Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, and James 2:8*) Three times in the Bible it is written, “*Love your enemies.*” (*Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27-28, and Luke 6:35*)

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2013 ISRAEL TOUR & EPICENTER CONFERENCE

June 25 - July 7



THE NEIGHBORS

PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS IN THE ARAB WORLD: A PERSONAL STORY

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies...” – Matthew 5:43-44

Today's headlines are filled with an on-going Islamic revolution in Egypt, sectarian violence in Iraq, political instability in both Jordan and Lebanon, and a brutal execution of the civil war in Syria.

But as Christians, we cannot ignore those suffering in these countries that neighbor Israel. In Scripture, after all, we clearly see that Jesus traveled to Lebanon and Jordan and word about Him spread through all of Syria. He loved the people. Today, there are still true Believers who follow our Lord Jesus Christ in each of these countries who have a great need and desire to be encouraged with our love and prayer for them.

“This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” – Matthew 22:38-39

The Joshua Fund, therefore, regularly sends in ministry teams to these countries to reach out with the hope of the Gospel for the lost, and to bring encouragement, Bible teaching and pastor training to the local Christians and churches. And we are seeing Christ change lives in the Arab world. Our teams are also constantly learning about the challenges Believers face in the region.

The following excerpt is from a recent TJF ministry trip to Egypt:

Entering the home we were instantly humbled by the simplicity of the surroundings, poor by any measure of standards in my own neighborhood back home. However the smiles and greetings we were welcomed with faded the dire situation that Miriam and Martha (not their real names) found themselves.

Miriam, the mother, had lost her husband several years prior. He had left Islam to follow Jesus—a decision that was considered a complete disgrace to his family. Her brother-in-law who served at a local Mosque as the Sheikh (religious leader in the area) used other family members to carry out the murder of his own brother.

Miriam, fearing for her life and that of her daughter, Martha, fled the village and has been on the run ever since. She knew that since she was completely dedicated to following Christ at all costs, it could have meant the sacrifice of both of their lives to stay in that village.

Smiles soon turned to tears as she described what their lives were like running from location to location without a man (father, husband, brother or uncle) in their lives. This was happening amidst the backdrop of a



culture that demands a man to serve as a covering, provider and protection for every female. She went on to explain that by leaving Islam to embrace the King of Kings, she too could be martyred for her faith, as was her husband.

Awaiting possible political asylum in another country, they had settled down temporarily in a safer section of a Christian enclave in Egypt. Thinking they would find the warm embrace of the local Church, the way they read about within the pages of the Bible, they were devastated to find quite the opposite.

Because they were Believers who came from a Muslim background, they were not accepted by the local Arab Christians who were not raised Muslim. Just like the apostle Paul in the book of Acts, this family was not welcomed by the local body of Christ due to fear and mistrust, leaving them all alone and in drastic need of fellowship and help.

As the conversation moved from tears of pain to the joy of salvation, we were moved with compassion by their complete trust and dedication to the Lord. Even with no income, no permanent home, no family and only the uncertainty of tomorrow, their faith and delight in our God stood strong.

We wanted to share the story of Miriam and Martha with you because it highlights both sides of a perplexing issue faced by many Believers throughout the Middle East today. New Believers from Muslim backgrounds

are looking to be accepted and loved by the Church and they are in need of encouragement and support as they live in some very harsh areas. The local church, meanwhile, faces the dangers not only of reaching out to share the Gospel with unbelievers, but also dangers in caring for Believers from Muslim backgrounds, because Islamic leaders and government officials are adamant that Muslims not convert to Christianity.

Please join us in prayer for Miriam, Martha and the many Believers throughout these nations that face persecution and harassment and many other challenges. Please also pray that the Lord continues to show The Joshua Fund how to bless such people in real and practical ways.



PRAY

HOW TO PRAY FOR THE NEIGHBORS

- For local, established churches to receive those leaving Islam into the Christian faith with open hearts and open arms. (Acts 9:26, 27)
- For the clear and thorough teaching of the Word of God everywhere the name of Christ is named.
- For the many Syrian refugees who need food, clothing, shelter and God's love.
- For the many who flee for safety from the violence against the Christian community.
- For the small pockets of Believers who are carrying out the Lord's work in the epicenter.
- For the Lord to continue to use the "house churches" that have developed, and to start many more such congregations. Many of these are made up of those who have left Islam to follow Jesus.

PORTABLE DISTRIBUTION CENTERS

HELP IN TIMES OF NEED

As Syria implodes and rumors of war with Iran abound, The Joshua Fund is constantly working to improve our ability to care for Jews and Arabs in difficult times. Currently, we distribute food and other humanitarian relief supplies to needy Israeli Jews and Arabs through distribution centers all throughout Israel, from the southern border near Gaza to the northern border near Lebanon. We also stockpile additional supplies at these centers for times of emergency. The Distribution Centers are the fruit of our partnerships with faithful local leaders: each center is a window for the rays of God's light to shine right into the lives of thousands of poor and needy families in Israel.

But what would happen during a crisis, be it war or natural disaster? How would we respond to unexpected needs that may arise in places where we don't have a Distribution Center? The Joshua Fund has recently developed 10 highly mobile Portable Distribution Center kits which will assist in the deployment of food and other life sustaining supplies to communities directly affected by such circumstances.

The Portable Distribution Center kits are designed to be fully set up by two volunteers within a half hour. The kits don't take up much space to store or transport, so by using a truck we can deliver over 5 tons of supplies, along with the Portable Distribution Center itself. Or, the kits can be

delivered by van, along with one ton of relief supplies. The high versatility of the portable centers allows us to add necessary support to existing locations, or effectively create and operate stand-alone distribution facilities in new locations where the needs are severe.

Each kit is self-contained. They contain food, water, supplies and equipment to sustain two volunteers for seven days. A portable generator is included to provide light, as well as for charging mobile or satellite phones, computers, radios and other electric equipment. We include a First Aid kit that meets standards for a 100-person bomb shelter, and the Lord has allowed us and our partners to have a day of training with the IDF on use of this First Aid kit to help war and earthquake victims. Folding tables, bags to distribute food, and other helpful equipment is also provided.

We pray for Israel's peace. But we also pray that when a crisis does strike, these Portable Distribution Centers will be a place for suffering people to receive food, rest and heartfelt prayer.

GIVE

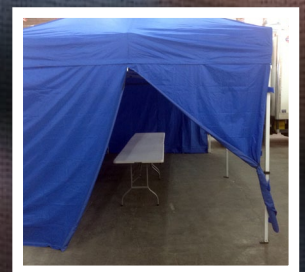
If you would like to partner with us in blessing people residing in the epicenter region, donations can be made online or by mailing a check to The Joshua Fund. See page 6 for more information.



TWO VOLUNTEERS
+ 30 MINUTES

Distribution Centers are designed to be fully set up by two volunteers within a half hour.

1



The centers are designed to be transported by a truck and include a generator that provides lighting and an electronics charging station.

2



The center is stocked with up to 5 tons of supplies and equipment including food and water.

3



“WHAT’S MORE, THE LORD COMMANDS THE CHURCH TO LOVE BOTH JEWS AND ARABS.”

Israel’s neighbors, and even her enemies, matter to God – therefore they should matter to us, too. In Exodus 22:21, for example, we’re told, “*You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*” (*Leviticus 19:33-35, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, Deuteronomy 24:17-22, and Zechariah 7:8-10*)

Yes, the Bible teaches that God, in His great sovereignty, chose the Jewish people to bless them. He promised to give the Land of Israel to the Jewish people as an “everlasting possession.” He did this not because Israel deserved such blessings, but out of His own love and sovereign will. But let’s be absolutely clear: God does not hate Israel’s neighbors. To the contrary, He loves them. He has not given the Jews a license to oppress their neighbors, or given the Jews permission to create injustice. Just the opposite is true. What’s more, the Lord commands the Church to love both Jews and Arabs.

This is not an “either/or” issue for God. Christ loves both sides, and because He is the Head of the Church, it is our solemn responsibility to love both sides. Jesus, of course, set the perfect example. (*Matthew 4:23-25, Matthew 15:21-28, John 3:16, Acts 1:8, Revelation 7:9*) In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His disciples to “*go...and make disciples of all nations...*” (*Matthew 28:18-20*)

Isn’t that amazing? In heaven, we are going to worship with Iranian Christians and Iraqi Christians and Syrian and Egyptian and Jordanian and Lebanese Christians. We’re also going to worship with Palestinians who love Jesus Christ as much or more than we do. This is what Jesus speaks of in John 17 about the “unity” of the Body of Christ and in Ephesians 2 about “the one new man,” a reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles.

This is the critical issue: Like so many others in the epicenter, most Israelis and Palestinians are living in spiritual darkness. Their lives are hard.

If a major war comes, their lives are about to get much harder. Now is not the time to let ourselves be divided. Now is the time to come alongside our brothers and sisters as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ builds His Church in the Land where He was born, was raised, preached in, suffered in, died in, was resurrected in, and where He’s coming back to reign from soon.

Bottom line: God loves the Jews, and God loves the Arabs and Persians and other nationalities that comprise Israel’s neighbors. The Church must too. It’s not “either/or.” It’s “both/and.” If we are obedient to these Biblical truths – and to the whole counsel of God – then one day we will stand before our Lord Jesus Christ and we want to hear Him say, “*Well done, My good and faithful servant; you were faithful in a few things, I will put you in charge of more things; enter into the joy of your Master.*” (*Matthew 25:21*)



WATCH VIDEO

Visit our website to view the 2012 Epicenter Conference video in which Joel C. Rosenberg discusses what the Scriptures say concerning Israel’s neighbors.



2013 Israel Tour & Epicenter Conference June 25-July 7 / Jerusalem, Israel

Join The Joshua Fund on our next tour of Israel – walk where Jesus walked, pray where Jesus and the apostles prayed, learn Israel's history, discover Israel's prophetic future, meet the people of the epicenter and draw closer to the Lord. During this unforgettable tour, join us for a special and unique day of service, providing a rare opportunity to meet and serve the poor and needy communities of Israel. In addition, the 2013 tour will include participation in the "2013 Epicenter Conference" to be held in Jerusalem, featuring Joel C. Rosenberg and several guest speakers. The conference will feature in-depth Bible teaching, as well as panel discussions focusing on current events in the Middle East and God's work continuing in the epicenter.

[Space is still available, complete details on the Israel Tours page of our website.](#)

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Update: It was reported in the 2012 Donor Report that a van was purchased to deliver Bibles and ministry materials in Syria. Due to the unstable situation in that region it was determined that a van for this use was not advisable. The funds will be reallocated for other ministry projects. The 2012 Donor Report is available on our website.



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Designated Giving

All contributions are tax deductible in the USA. If The Joshua Fund is successful in raising our financial goal for a specific project for which you have designated your donations, all excess funds for that project will be applied to related projects or to the general fund of TJF.

We are a member of the ECFA (Evangelical Council on Financial Accountability) which was founded in 1979. The ECFA provides accreditation to Christian non-profit organizations that faithfully demonstrate compliance with the ECFA Standards pertaining to financial accountability, fund-raising and board governance.

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