

Messianic Jews, Evangelicals Unite to Help Needy Israelis

Jewish believers and Christians are distributing humanitarian aid and serving as advocates for Israel

Responding to what they say is a biblical mandate to support God's chosen people, Messianic Jews and evangelical Christians are pouring funds and humanitarian aid into Israel. The move is a reflection of a broader trend among Jewish and Christian groups nationwide to forge closer ties on issues of mutual interest.

Among the ministries working to bring help and comfort to Israel are the Joseph Project, which distributes millions of dollars in aid through 22 "blessing centers" located across Israel, and Front Page Jerusalem (FPJ), a radio network that offers Christians an Israeli perspective of world events.

"It's clear in the Bible that God wants me and other Christians to stand with Israel," FPJ founder Earl Cox told Charisma.

Cox said his life changed in 2002 while on a trip to Israel when he visited the site of a terrorist bombing that occurred in Netanya during a Passover Seder. "The terrorists arm their bombs with poison-coated nails to pierce the victims' bodies," he said. "If they don't die, their suffering is multiplied." He said he knew upon picking up the nails that "the rest of my days would be spent telling the Israeli side of the story."

The Joseph Project, a ministry of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) based in Springfield, Pa., is the

result of what MJAA General Secretary Joel Chernoff said was a clear, prophetic call of God.

“In 1996 God indicated to me that a million Jews would be frightened or driven out of Eastern Europe and Russia and immigrate to Israel,” Chernoff told Charisma. “This is a prophetic word much like the one given to Joseph to prepare for famine in Egypt.”

In response, the Joseph Project has filled 33 containers of humanitarian aid that have been distributed by Messianic Jewish groups in Israel. The ministry has enlisted two cargo ships from Friend Ships International, which are expected to make about 30 trips in the next two years, delivering 75 to 100 40-ton containers of aid.

“A million Israelis live below the poverty level,” Chernoff said. “While we are meeting current needs, we are also preparing for the flood of Jewish immigrants in the future. We want to help our brothers and sisters get ready.”

Funded by individual contributions and ministry sponsors, the Joseph Project distributes supplies to Jews and Arabs, though Chernoff said many Palestinian Christians are reluctant to receive the aid because they may be viewed as “collaborators” with Jews, a reputation that puts them in danger.

“Many Arabs who have been identified as ‘collaborators’ have been murdered,” Chernoff said. “As we can see a way around this, we will help in any way.”

The ministry’s roster currently is saturated with Gentile Christian organizations that help fill and ship the

containers. Recently organizations in Europe and Hong Kong have joined the team.

Remaining unaffiliated with a ministry or organization, Cox has used his own resources to fund Front Page Jerusalem. A gentile Christian, Cox served at senior levels in four presidential administrations but says his "true Christian walk began two years ago" when God instructed him to work on Israel's behalf.

"You cannot love Jesus without loving Israel," he said. "God has called me to wake up Christians by broadcasting Israel's side of the story."

He originated his effort in his hometown of Charleston, S.C., by establishing relationships with local Jewish rabbis. Cox then assembled evangelical pastors and rabbis to inaugurate the Jerusalem Assistance Fund to help terror victims. Thus far, the fund has given away \$40,000. Cox personally delivered the funds to victims in Israeli hospitals.

"I am so welcomed there," he said. "The Israelis thrive on our moral support more than our money." The Jerusalem Post called Cox's work a real "morale boost."

In February, Cox launched Front Page Jerusalem at the annual meeting of the National Religious Broadcasters. The weekly radio newsmagazine gives voice to Israel's top leaders. The studios are housed in Jerusalem's Mount Zion Hotel. By the end of 2003, Cox hopes to be broadcasting on 300 to 500 radio stations in the United States.

Arlene Bridges Samuels

For information on the Joseph Project, visit or call (800) 225-6522. For information on Front Page Jerusalem, visit or call (843) 478-5812.

gious-liberty issues