

3 Ways You Can Form a Special Bond With the Holy Land and Bless Israel This Passover

Passover and Easter are only days away. Here in Israel, that means our historic cities, iconic markets and holy sites will be filled with activity on these sacred holidays.

As we are all eager to finally put the coronavirus restrictions behind us, many tourists are finally making a long-awaited pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I hope Israel can now return to its special place in the world as a beacon of hospitality.

As these holidays approach, you're likely thinking of the historical, physical places where the Israelites longed to be when God spared them during Passover, or the streets where Jesus spent His life and ministry – at least I hope you are! So as this time of year draws your hearts and your minds toward the land of the Bible, here are three practical ways you can form a special bond with the Holy Land and also bless Israel as commanded in Genesis 12:3.

1. Plan that trip to Israel you've been putting off for so long. Nothing compares to being here and seeing the Garden of Gethsemane, the Sea of Galilee or the Western Wall for yourself. Walking the ancient streets of Nazareth or the Via Dolorosa helps you physically engage with the origins of your faith unlike anywhere else in the world.

This is a special place. And it's truly a miracle that Israel was restored in the 20th century and that these sacred landmarks are still preserved. I hope you will consider visiting, perhaps even this year. I've never met anyone who's regretted their journey to the Holy Land. It would surely be the most impactful journey of your life.

Don't put it off any longer. Come and see your friends here in Israel and watch the Bible come to life.

2. Support local artisans and small businesses right here in Israel. Perhaps traveling to the Holy Land sounds great to you, but it's just not possible for you in the immediate future. Fortunately, there are ways you can smell the aromas, taste the spices and enjoy the handiwork of Israel without leaving your home. And you can even get to know my friends who run shops all across the Holy Land, and support their businesses that were under great financial stress when COVID-19 decimated our tourism industry. I know many of those personally who have been dealing with the daily reality that they may have to close their doors.

Many vendors are selling their gifts and artisanal goods online, or even in monthly subscription boxes that are shipped right to your front door. This is actually one of the ways that we at Artza have found to help these shopkeepers get creative in unforeseen circumstances. We provide a way for you to get familiar with those who make up a critical component of Israel's economy, many of whom have run family-owned shops here for generations. The unique treasures we ship to your home come from different cities and towns all across the Holy Land and help you walk in the footsteps of Jesus from afar.

3. Pray for the senseless violence to end and terrorist plots to be thwarted. Against the backdrop of excitement as we welcome back more visitors with each passing month, Israelis are once again faced with reckless violence from Hamas and others trying to disrupt our peace. In just one week, three separate terrorist attacks have left 11 dead. Stabbings, car rammings and shootings have killed Jews and Christians alike in the month of March.

Please pray the violence will end. Pray that God would protect us from further attacks, and pray that peace will prevail. The Jewish people have increasingly been able to count on the

fervent and genuine support of our Christian friends, and we greatly covet your petitions to heaven as well at this difficult time. {eoa}

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