

Giving Blood: A Connection With Mother's Day, Shavuot and the Book of Ruth

Two holidays—connected by Scripture—come to mind this week. Mother's Day, which was this past Sunday, is not biblical, and Shavuot (Pentecost) is, but the connection nevertheless runs deep.

Recently, I had the privilege of hosting two good friends who are Christian leaders from the United States while they were visiting Israel. One of them, Linda, toured the Israel national blood bank and made a donation to Heart to Heart to provide much-needed financial support.

She asked that a certificate be sent to her mother, noting that the donation—to save lives in Israel—was made in her honor and in honor of Mother's Day. Nothing says “I love you, Mom” like a virtual blood donation to save lives in Israel.

Another good friend, Annette, led a group to donate blood in Jerusalem—a spiritual and emotional experience. Prior to donating blood, Annette shared that after her daughter was born, she required two units of blood. Realizing that the miracle of childbirth sometimes comes with complications, Annette noted that, thanks to the generous blood donation by complete strangers, she was alive and able to be a mother to her daughters today. It was a highly emotional moment.

Annette prayed that the blood she was donating would either go to a mother in a similar condition or to someone who has a mother. That way, both the recipient and the mother could be comforted, as mothers always worry and care about their children. Providing comfort to any mother whose child is in need (no matter what age the child is) is a great blessing and privilege.

Eight years ago, another mother prayed in a Jerusalem hospital, beseeching God to save her son, Daniel. A month earlier, Daniel and his father were on an outing in Tel Aviv when a terrorist detonated his suicide belt next to them, riddling Daniel's 16-year-old body with shrapnel. In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack, Daniel required 80 units of blood to stay alive while the doctors tried to heal his devastated body.

On Mother's Day 2006, Daniel died, leaving his mother heartbroken and grieving but thankful that the blood and medical care he received at least enabled him to stay alive for another month. (The full story about Daniel can be read here at .)

For Daniel's mother, Mother's Day will always have an edge of sadness. But as Annette noted, perhaps there was comfort in the fact that the blood donations of 80 anonymous strangers saved Daniel's life in the immediate aftermath of the terror attack and that his family got one more month with him. Priceless.

In two weeks, Jews around the world will observe Shavuot (Pentecost), one of the three biblical festivals. Among the traditions of Shavuot, we read the book of Ruth, highlighting the choice of a Gentile woman to stand with her Jewish mother-in-law.

This connects to our aforementioned stories because, like any good mother-in-law, Naomi embraces her children's spouses as her own children. In my own life, this is the model my mother gave me. My mom's name, coincidentally, was Ruth.

Ruth's affirmation, "Where you go, I will go, where you lodge, I will lodge, your people are my people and your God is my God," is also found in the stories above. We see it in the active choice of two Christian women (among many) to stand with Israel, bless Israel and donate blood to save lives in

Israel in a way that would make Ruth proud. Inspired by this, if Ruth were here today, standing in the same fields outside Jerusalem where she met Boaz, she might continue her affirmation by saying, "My blood is your blood."

My mother was a great woman. She died a month after Daniel, requiring several units of blood each day to keep her alive for much of the last week of her life. Indeed, it was a comfort to have the ability—and the lifesaving resources—to sustain her life, even if only to give closure to me and my family.

My mother also never liked to observe Mother's Day, reminding us that every day should be Mother's Day. She didn't say it because she wanted more attention but because it was important for us to recognize all she did, that the obligation of the Fifth Commandment was not limited to one day, and to make us aware of the precious gifts she brought to our family, as noted in Proverbs 31:10.

Even if you've already done something to celebrate your mother this week, I'm sure she'd find it extra special to know that you love her so much that, in her honor, you've made a donation to save the life of another mother's child in Israel. To show your mother how much you love her, Heart to Heart will gladly send her a beautiful certificate commemorating your donation. Better yet, show mom how much you love her with a recurring monthly donation, accompanied with a certificate every month, reminding her just how much she's in your heart.

And if you just want to share your heart for Israel, and affirm Ruth's clear standing with the Jewish people, please join us.

Jonathan Feldstein is the director of Heart to Heart, a unique virtual blood donation program to bless Israel and save lives in Israel. Born and educated in the U.S., Feldstein emigrated to Israel in 2004. He is married and the father of six.

Throughout his life and career, he has been blessed by the calling to fellowship with Christian supporters of Israel and shares experiences of living as an Orthodox Jew in Israel. He writes a regular column for Charisma's Standing With Israel. You can contact Jonathan at firstpersonisrael@.